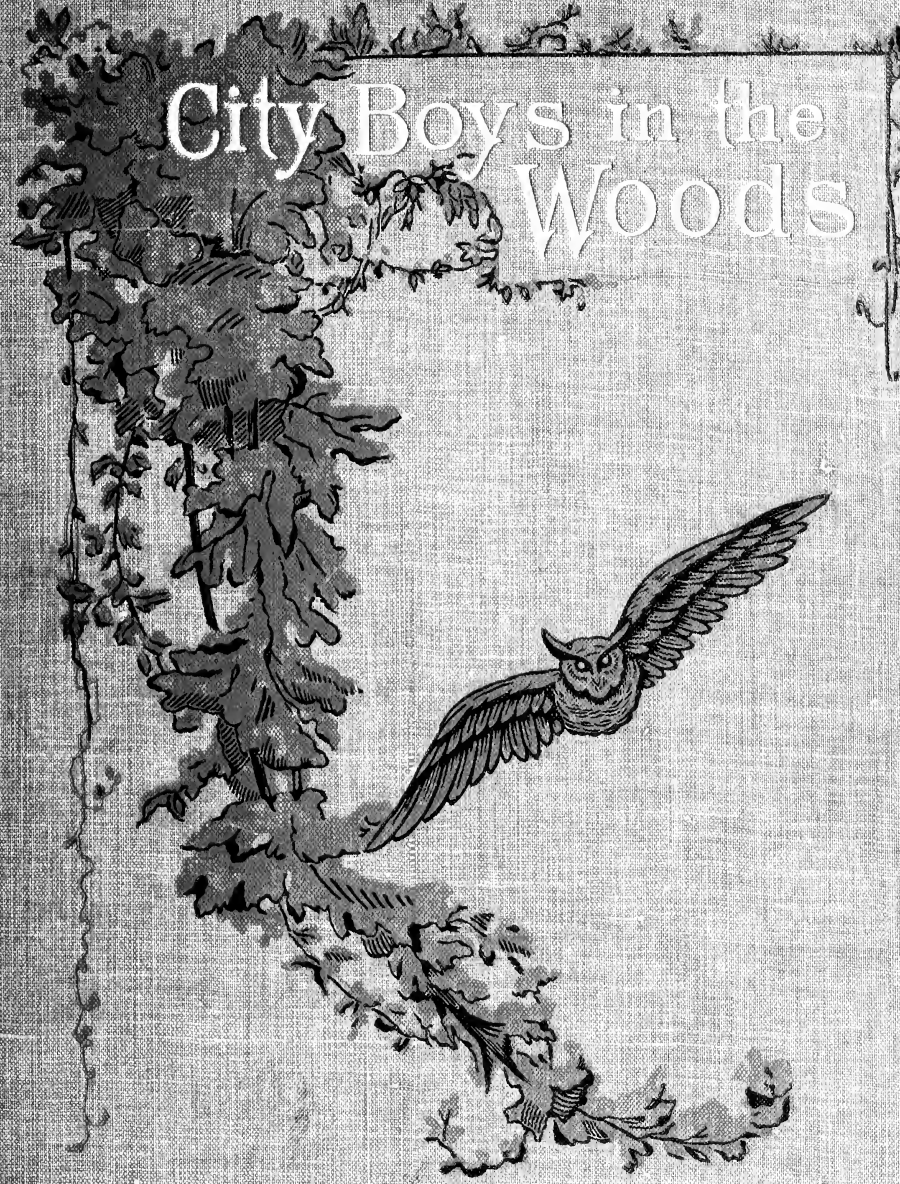
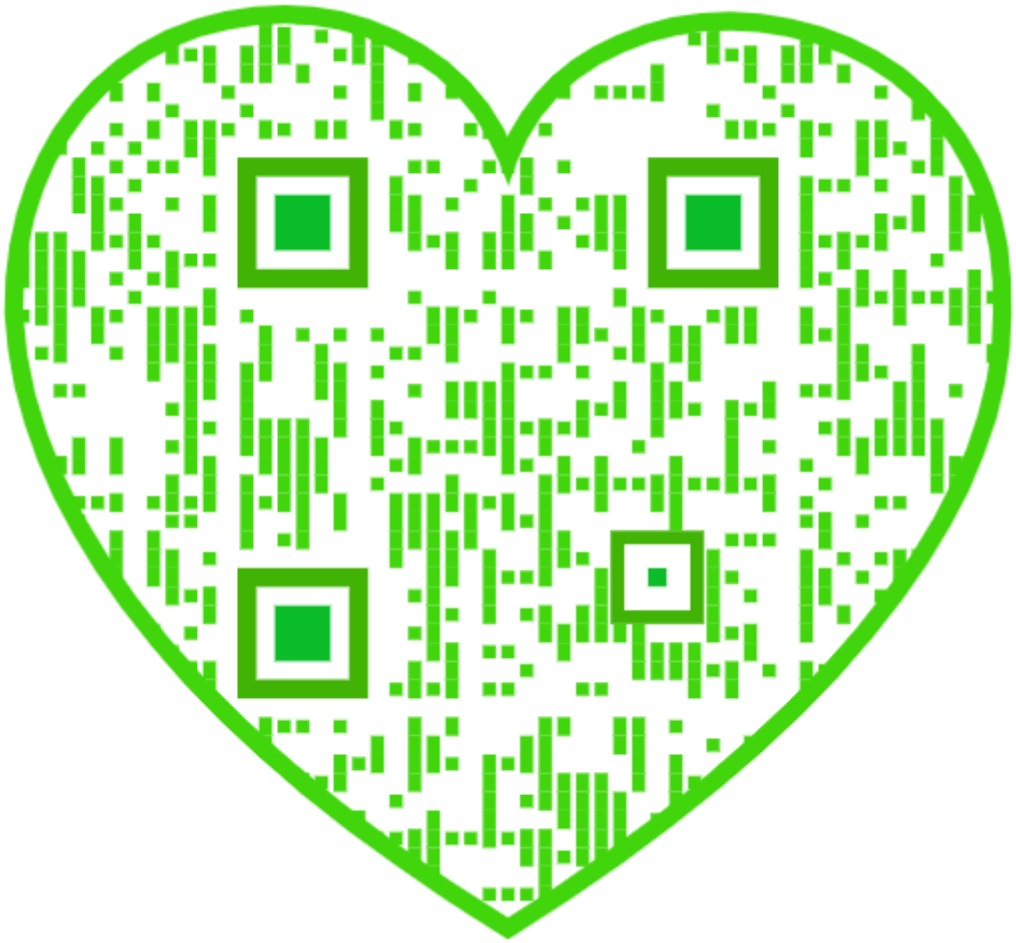
City Boys in the Woods





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THE PORTAGE.

CITY BOYS IN THE WOODS

OR

A TRAPPING VENTURE IN MAINE

BY

HENRY P. WELLS

AUTHOR OF "THE AMERICAN SALMON-FISHERMAN"
"FLY-RODS AND FLY-TACKLE" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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TO

JOHN S. DANFORTH

OF PARMACHEENE LAKE, MAINE

IN MEMORY OF THE MANY HAPPY DAYS IN WHICH
PACK ON BACK, WE HAVE WANDERED TOGETHER THROUGH THE WILDERNESS
WHEREIN THE SCENE OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES IS LAID

This Book is Dedicated

BY

HIS SINCERE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

956

PREFACE.

BOOKS of hunting and trapping adventure for the young are superabundant. But whence do most of them derive their inspiration? Certainly not from nature. The toils and privations which are the certain and continuous daily incidents of such a life are usually glozed over or ignored altogether, while purely imaginary, or at best very infrequent, cases of good-fortune are grouped together and follow one another as though of every-day occurrence. The impression so produced on the minds of the young is an absolutely false impression. That it is pernicious as well, the police records of every large city bear witness. Hardly a week passes in which lads, beguiled by such books, are not arrested on their way to kill Indians and hunt buffaloes in the far West.

This book is the outcome of a suggestion that a story truthfully portraying the actual life of the hunter and trapper would be timely. The author has succeeded or failed in his purpose, in the exact proportion in which he succeeds or fails in impressing on the minds of his readers the truth that a special education is as necessary to a life in the wilderness as it is to navigate that other wilderness—the boundless ocean.

H. P. W.

NEW YORK, *September*, 1889.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE.—ARRIVAL.—A HUNTING TRIP IN THE FOREST.—DISCOURAGEMENT.—A CHANGE OF PLAN.....Page 1

CHAPTER II.

THE FOOD QUESTION AND ITS SOLUTION.—FRIENDLY ADVICE.—INTO THE HEART OF THE WILDERNESS.—DEER.—THE TIMID MULE.—THE "BIG RIP."—THE FIRST CAMP.—SUPPER.—"IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BAD IDEA IF WE HAD TAKEN A FEW LESSONS IN COOKING."—SLEEP.—THE NIGHT ALARM 11

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST.—THE TRAPS ARE SET.—PASSING THE "BIG RIP."—DISASTER.—JOHN DANT, THE TRAPPER.—"HE WHO AIMS ALL OVER [AN ANIMAL] DON'T STAND MUCH CHANCE OF HITTING ANYWHERE IN PARTICULAR." 26

CHAPTER IV.

TO THE SCENE OF DISASTER.—THE CAUSE OF THE NIGHT ALARM.—RUNNING A RAPID.—NOTHING SAVED FROM THE WRECK.—"WHAT SHALL WE DO?"—A TIMELY INVITATION.—THE "TIMID MULE" AGAIN.—A HINT ON TRAPPING.—POLING UP THE "BIG RIP"..... 37

CHAPTER V.

PREPARING FOR A TRAMP.—LAYING OUT A SABLE LINE.—TRAPPING SABLE AND FISHER..... 52

CHAPTER VI.

LUNCH AT THE LITTLE RIVER.—CAMP-FIRES IN THE WOODS.—THE CARIBOU.—LOST.—HOW A WOODSMAN FINDS HIS WAY IN THE FOREST.—A DEER-ROAD AND TRAIL... 70

CHAPTER VII.

BACK AT DANT'S CAMP.—MOOSE-TALK.—A HUNTING ADVENTURE.—ATTACKED BY A MOOSE..... 88

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH THE WOODS INTO CANADA.—HARD TRAVELLING.—THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.—ARRIVAL AT THE BOG.—A SHOT AT A DEER..... 107

CHAPTER IX.

RIFLE-SHOOTING AT GAME.—HABITS OF DEER.—THE BOG CAMP.—VISIT FROM A SKUNK.—HOW THE NORTH-EASTERN BOUNDARY LINE WAS LOCATED ..... Page 125

CHAPTER X.

TRAILING A WOUNDED DEER.—"A CRACK SHOT."—ENCOUNTER WITH CARIBOU.—A DEAD DEER.—A DEER-SLED.—A TUMP-LINE.—COASTING ON A DEER 142

CHAPTER XI.

VENISON.—THE TRAPPER'S REFRIGERATOR; ITS LOCK AND KEY.—BEAVER.—BEAVER DAMS.—BEAVER FOOD.—THE BEAVER'S HOUSE.—THE BEAVER'S FOOD-PILE.—THE BOAT THIEVES 159

CHAPTER XII.

BEAVERS' WORK.—BEAVERS' TEETH.—HOW BEAVERS FELL TREES.—BEAVER CANALS.—THE PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE BEAVER.—HABITS OF THE BEAVER.—A CHANCE ENCOUNTER.—THE TRAPPER'S FRUIT-TREE.—TRAPPING BEAVERS.—SETTING BEAVER-TRAPS.—THE FRONT-LEG SET.—THE HIND-LEG SET.—MIDWINTER TRAPPING 178

CHAPTER XIII.

MOOSE-CALLING PROPOSED AND ABANDONED.—THEY TRY JACK-HUNTING.—AN UNFORTUNATE ENCOUNTER.—"GOOD GRACIOUS! WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR?" 201

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOODSMAN'S AXE AND ITS DANGERS.—AN ACCIDENT.—"GRAB IT, THERE'S BUTTONS ON IT!"—MOOSE-CALLING.—THE TRAPPER CALLS.—A MOOSE AT LAST.—A STARTLING ENCOUNTER 217

CHAPTER XV.

RETURN TO THE LAKE—"TIT FOR TAT."—THE TRAPPER LECTURES ON CARIBOU.—APPEARANCE OF THE CARIBOU.—HABITS OF THE CARIBOU.—THE CARIBOU'S CURIOUS TRICKS ON THE ICE.—FOOD OF THE CARIBOU.—A TRIAL OF SPEED.—A CHASE ON SNOW-SHOES.—A CARIBOU HUNT 240

CHAPTER XVI.

STORM-BOUND.—PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.—THE TRAPPER COMMENTS ON LIFE IN THE WOODS.—THE BOYS RETURN HOME 267

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
A Wayside View	3
Forest and Field	6
The Last of Civilization	7
The River	8
The Last House	9
The Starting Place	12
Buying Supplies	15
The Boat	17
Head of Cow Moose	20
On the River	21
Another Bend	22
An Abandoned Camp-fire	23
The "Big Rip"	27
They proceeded "to Wade" the Boat Up-stream	29
In the Trackless Wilderness	31
The Forks	32
"Are you Mr. Dant?"	33
A Trapper's Camp	35
Snowed in for the Winter	39
On the Trail	41
A Screech-owl	42
Above the Forks	43
Miles of Swamp and Trackless Forest	45
Poling up a Rapid	47
Running a Rapid	49
In the Woods	53
A Forest Highway	57
A Weasel and its Victim	59
A Spring-pole	63
A Mountain Brook	64
An Otter and her Young	65
A Turbulent Mountain Stream	71
Escaping from a Forest Fire	73
A Burnt Forest	77
"Where the Wind has Raked through the Trees"	80
A Peculiar-looking Place	81
On the Little River	82
Along the Bank of the Stream	83
An Obstacle to Travel	85
A Lone Fisherman	86
Still-hunting Moose	89
Head of Bull Moose	93
Moose at Bay	95
Our Meat	97
Following an Elk Trail	101
An Anxious Moment	103
A Long Shot	105
A Group of Elk	109
"We'd better Lunch here and Rest for an Hour"	112
A Lumber Works	113
A Lumberman's Bivouac	116
The Trail of the Lumberman	119
Good Travelling	121
A Monarch of the Forest	127
In Wait on the Bog	129
Skunk	131
The Bog Valley	133
A Trapper's Cabin	135
In the Boundary Range	137
On the Way to the St. Lawrence	140
Overlooking the Bog Valley	143
On the Bog Stream	146
Camp in the Woods	147
A Tenant of the Bog	148
"We Camped near a Pond about Four Miles from here"	151
The Edge of the Woods	153
Head of the Bog Stream	155
Below the Bog Camp	161
A Beaver Dam	165
The Stone Dam	170
Beaver Houses	172
In an Old Beaver-works	175
Cut Surface of Birch Log	179
Chip cut by Beaver (natural size)	180
Beaver's Skull	181
Beaver Teeth (half-size)	181

	PAGE
Birch Log cut by Beaver	183
Beavers at Work	185
Beaver's Tail	187
Beaver-trap	189
Setting a Beaver-trap	193
Ground-plan of Beaver-trap	197
"After the Snow begins to Fall"	203
Home of the Deer	207
Hunting by Moonlight	209
A Likely Place for Game	211
Over a Beaver Dam	214
Between the Lake and the Forks	221
"There's about Five Miles of those Rapids—in places very Nasty"	223
Dropping down a Rapid on Poles	225
"Made me Wish I was back at the Lake"	227
Moose-calling	229
Movement of the Horn in the Moose-call	232
Moose-hunting by Jack-light	235
When at length the Lake appeared	243
"They are Spring Ponds, and mighty Cold"	245
Head of a Bull Caribou	247
Head of a Cow Caribou	251
Caribou on the Ice	253
In Luck	255
Return from Caribou-hunting	263
"Instantly Everything is in Confusion"	269
"The Thermometer 'way below Zero and the Air filled with flying Snow"	273
The Last View of the Wilderness	275

Head and Tail Pieces to each Chapter.

CITY BOYS IN THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.

Departure.—Arrival.—A Hunting Trip in the Forest.—Discouragement.—A Change of Plan.

EVERYTHING has a beginning—a rule to which this story is no exception.

The events of which it is the history arose from the following incident:

Two middle-aged gentlemen, Mr. Henry Hildreth and Mr. Richard Halstead, sat facing one another in the library of the latter one pleasant evening in early October. It needed but a glance at the two gentlemen to convince the most careless observer that they were men of mark among their fellows. Indeed, in wealth as in social position and influence they stood second to none in the city in which they lived. They had been school-boys and college chums together, and the love and confidence in one another which had then arisen had never diminished nor grown cold.

"So you think we had better let them go, Harry?" said Mr. Halstead.

"Yes, I am inclined to think so," replied his companion. "I have talked the matter over with my boy, as you have with yours; and though, of course, we can forbid them going, I don't think we

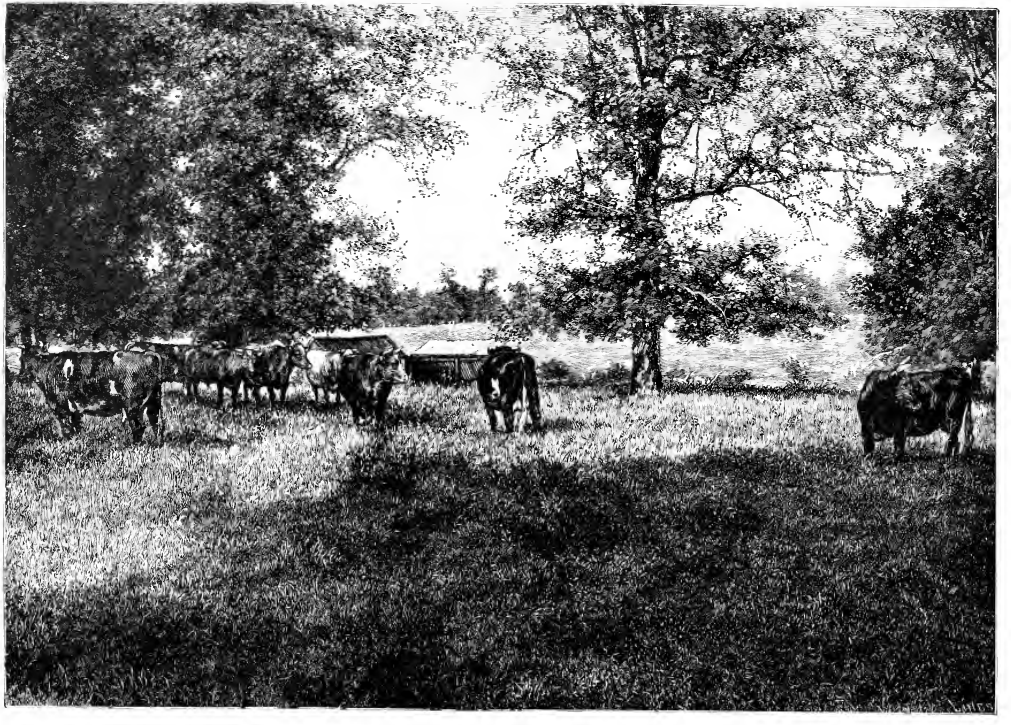
can talk the idea out of their heads. The boys have been brought up so far by persuasion rather than force, and that plan hasn't worked so badly that I am inclined to change it now. If their hearts are really set on this trapping expedition after all we have said to them, as certainly is the case, why not let them try it? If they gain nothing else, they will surely get an idea of the rough side of life, which will do no harm to boys brought up never to know what it is to want a meal or to sleep on anything harder than a spring-bed."

"Very well; we will consider that settled, then," said Mr. Halstead. "They are tough and strong, fair swimmers, and used to fire-arms; so I hardly think they will be likely to get into any scrape so serious that they cannot pull through it somehow. But as they are following their own judgment rather than ours, don't you think it would be wise to give them a fair start? Then, if the trip does not turn out quite as they expect, they will have but themselves to blame."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Hildreth; "that is, let them say how much money they wish to complete their outfit and how much to take with them, and let them have it, if not altogether unreasonable. But except in that respect I should leave them entirely to their own devices."

So the boys, who bore their fathers' names, received permission to go.

The rail, a wagon, and time brought Dick Halstead and Harry Hildreth, with their effects, to the margin of the Maine wilderness. Seventeen years old, well-grown and able-bodied for their age, their minds inflamed by much reading of hunting and trapping books, they had at last their hearts' desire, and the region and the life for which they had so long sighed now lay close before them. But how different is a view obscured and mellowed by distance from the same scene close at hand! At home but the main features of the enterprise had attracted their attention, and these seemed simple and easily provided for. Now a thousand and one



A WAYSIDE VIEW.

practical and hitherto unsuspected details obtruded themselves, each petty in itself, but upon which, they had still the sense to see, hung the success or failure of their expedition. It was like an army preparing for a campaign. The dullest may recognize that centres where many roads meet are the points of importance, upon the occupation of which depends the power to make every man available in time of danger, and even with a smaller army always to outnumber the enemy at the actual point of attack. This to many appears to be all there is in the art of war. But between the army and the places it should occupy lie streams and rivers to be crossed. A single storm may convert the solid earth, churned by thousands of wagons and a numerous artillery, into a quagmire. Yet despite every obstacle the men must be fed three times a day, their ammunition must attend them closely, provision must be made for the care and transportation of the sick and wounded, and a hundred other contingencies must be provided for which tax to the uttermost the foresight of the ablest commander.

And so the boys found it. They thought they had planned their campaign with judgment and skill. Now they found that few of their plans extended beyond the edge of the apparently interminable forest which spread before them, unbroken except by the hand of Nature almost to the St. Lawrence River. Another hour would bring them not only to the small and scattered settlement which here formed the outpost of civilization, but even to the end of the last wagon-road. The time for action was at hand, yet they knew not what to do. In their dilemma they appealed for assistance to the driver of the wagon that bore them. He advised them to stop at a certain farm-house, the last in the settlement, until they had time to look around them and decide what was best.

They concluded to do so for that night, and then to camp just within the edge of the woods, so as to rely on the settlement for such food supplies as the town alone could furnish, and to hunt and trap on foot through the forest. They soon learned, however, that the settlers and their boys had trapped and hunted the immediate neighborhood so closely that they must either go much farther into

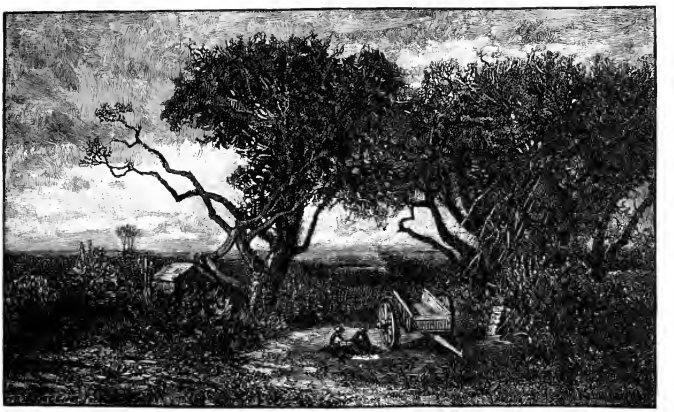
the wilderness or give up all hope of a successful trip. If room for doubt still remained, one day's tramp in the woods proved beyond question that a change of plan was necessary.

They set out in high spirits, the one with a double-barrelled breech-loading shot-gun, and the other with a Winchester rifle upon his shoulder. Both carried ammunition enough for a week's campaign, for what burden could be more useless than an empty gun? A large sheath-knife, gor-

FOREST AND FIELD.

geous with red leather and German silver, and a heavy revolver hung from the waist-belt of each. To what use these could be put for which their guns and pocket jack-knives would not better serve, they neither stopped to think then nor when they drew so heavily upon their treasury to buy them. Were not the hunters and trappers of the books always so provided? With these things, and food for one meal, they entered the forest.

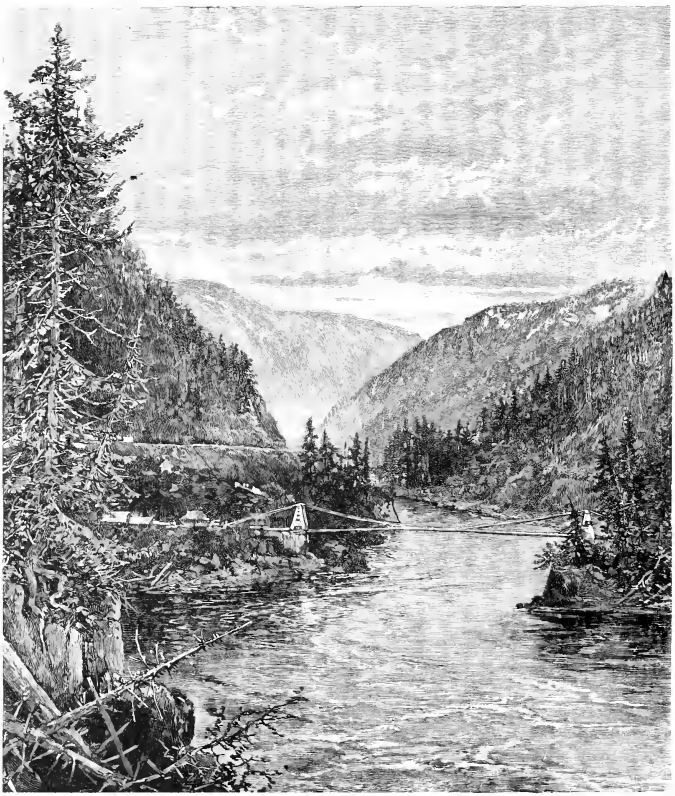
How little the reality resembled their anticipations! Where were the great trees with the pleasant shady lanes between their gray trunks that the boys were accustomed to in vacation rambles



THE LAST OF CIVILIZATION.

in the country? Not here, at all events. Forest and shade they found in plenty, but the pleasant lanes were altogether wanting. Fallen trees lay in every direction, the larger crushing the smaller to the earth in their descent, their roots and branches mingled together in an almost impassable tangle. Bushes and saplings threw out their stems almost parallel with the ground, each a trap to catch one's feet and throw him headlong. Large roots ran along the surface of the earth as slippery as if greased, and many were

the tumbles they occasioned. When a soft carpet of moss promised easier walking, the boys found that it but covered loose stones and roots, among which was hidden many a pitfall. At every few feet was a tree trunk to be climbed over or crawled under; or if they worked their way out of the timber, it was but to fare even worse in an alder swamp. It was heart-breaking work.



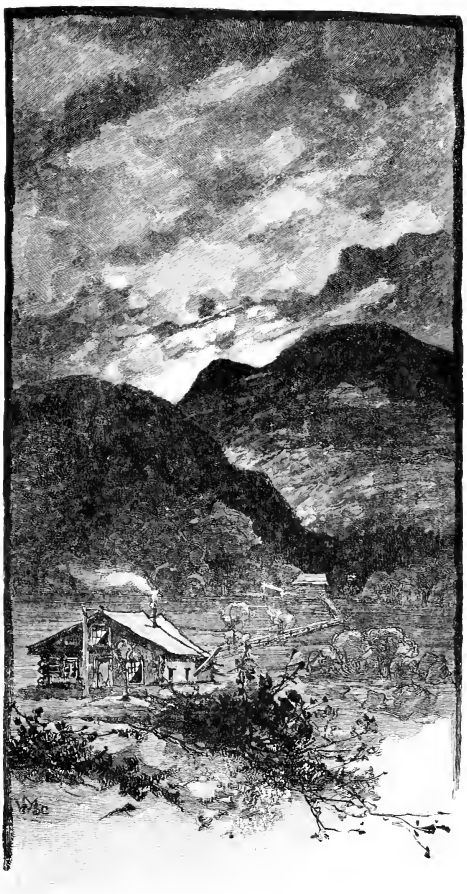
THE RIVER.

After some four hours of this labor the boys, streaming with perspiration and bruised by many a fall, halted to rest.

"Well, Dick," said Harry, "I have had about enough of this sort of thing. What do you say?"

"I don't think there is much use in going any farther," replied Dick. "We make too much noise to get near anything worth shooting, and I don't see how we can go any more quietly: do you?"

"No," said Harry; "and besides, it's clear we can't break our necks and scratch our eyes out through this stuff every day, and accomplish anything trapping, either. We can't cover ground enough. Let's go back to the settlement and get a boat



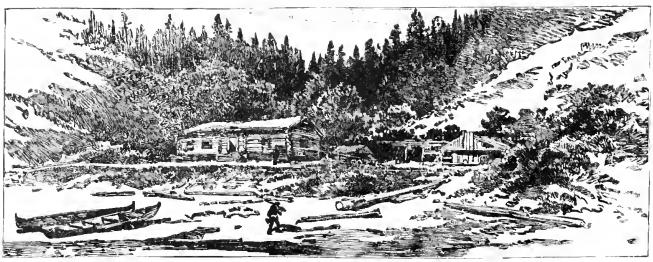
THE LAST HOUSE.

and take to the river. We can hunt and trap along that, and carry everything we have with only the trouble of rowing."

"I'd rather row twenty miles than walk one here," replied Dick. "But the boat will cost a good deal, and we may run short of money to get home with if we buy one."

"I suppose we can hire one," said Harry; "and even if we have to buy, we'll have furs and moose and caribou hides enough when we come back to make us all right so far as money is concerned."

Fortunately a range of hills on one side and the river on the other confined the boys to a rather narrow strip of country, and though they wandered from the shortest line considerably, they reached the settlement at last, bruised and weary in body and discouraged in mind.



CHAPTER II.

The Food Question and its Solution.—Friendly Advice.—Into the Heart of the Wilderness.—Deer.—The Timid Mule.—The "Big Rip."—The First Camp.—Supper.—"It wouldn't have been a bad idea if we had taken a few lessons in cooking."—Sleep.—The Night Alarm.

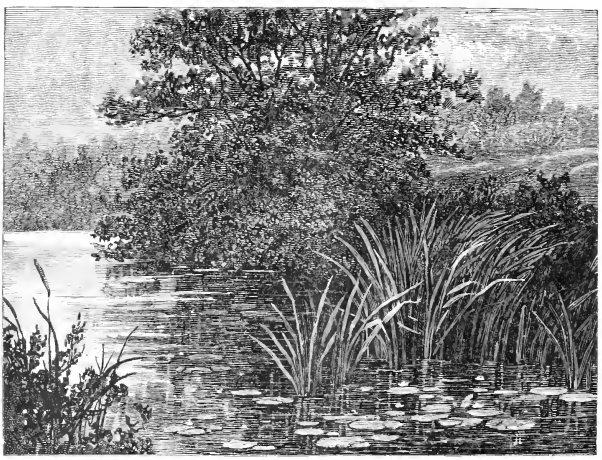
THE bright morning sun brought fresh hope and courage to the boys with the new day. The river headed somewhere up near the Canadian boundary. They would inquire about it, and try to hire a boat. Then there was the question of provisions, for heretofore they had lived with a settler. What would they need? Perhaps the keeper of the solitary little store might know. They would consult him.

He did know. How long were they to be gone? Six weeks? The store-keeper figured upon a sheet of wrapping-paper for a few minutes with a very stubby lead-pencil, and then reported as follows:

"They would need 84 pounds of flour, 20 of pork, 21 of butter, 32 of maple-sugar, 16 of white sugar, 16 of canned milk, 21 of hard

tack, 16 of oatmeal, 3 of tea, a large box of matches, a small bag of salt, and a package of pepper."

"Oh, I don't care much for tea!" exclaimed Harry. "Let's have coffee instead; and besides, we ought to have some potatoes—say a bushel or a bushel and a half. I've heard there is nothing one misses in the woods so much as potatoes. And onions—onions are first-rate, and they won't let me eat them at home. Say half a bushel of onions. And then we ought to have some beans. I have heard there is lots of hard work in beans—say eight or ten pounds of beans. And then there's rice—"



THE STARTING PLACE.

"Hold on, Harry, for gracious' sake," interrupted Dick, taking alarm from a broad grin which was gradually overspreading the leathery face of the store-keeper. "We don't want to keep a restaurant. Let's draw a line at the beans until we see how much weight we have already bargained for. How many pounds of coffee will we need—twelve? Well, wait a moment, and I'll figure how much everything will weigh." He did so.

"Good gracious! over three hundred pounds of provisions! How are we to carry these and all our other things?" asked Dick.

"When people are going into the back country trapping," the store-keeper answered, "they generally spend quite a while beforehand in carrying their food and traps to where they think game is likely to be plenty, and in distributing them about. It's now the 10th of October, and you ought to begin to trap on the 15th. You will have a pretty good load, but I guess you can get all your stuff and yourselves into a boat, if it's big enough."

"But we intend to hunt," said Harry. "We heard that there were lots of moose, deer, and caribou in these woods. Can't we depend some on hunting, and take less of these things? We came up here to rough it. We don't care for many luxuries."

"Well, boys, I guess you will find it rough enough to suit you, no matter what you take," replied the store-keeper, with a smile. "Game is plenty enough. But hunting is one thing, finding is another, and to kill game when found is another thing still. The game in this country, or in any other that I ever heard of, does not come up to the hunter hollering to be shot. Until the ground is well covered with snow you can't get through these woods without making noise enough to frighten every animal within half a mile" (the boys looked at one another, but said nothing), "and as the woods are too thick as a general thing to see an animal over about thirty yards, I don't think your chance of any very fat living at their expense is really first-rate."

"Then you think we will not be able to find much game?" said Dick.

"Not unless you should happen to catch an animal at the water, I should say, and at this season of the year they don't come down very much. At any rate, I would not advise you to depend on it. The allowance I have given you is just what those who trap for a living take, and you may depend upon it they take in all the chances at big game that come along."

The boys adjourned for consultation, and while still hoping for much better luck, wisely concluded to follow the store-keeper's advice, provided he would agree to buy back such supplies as they

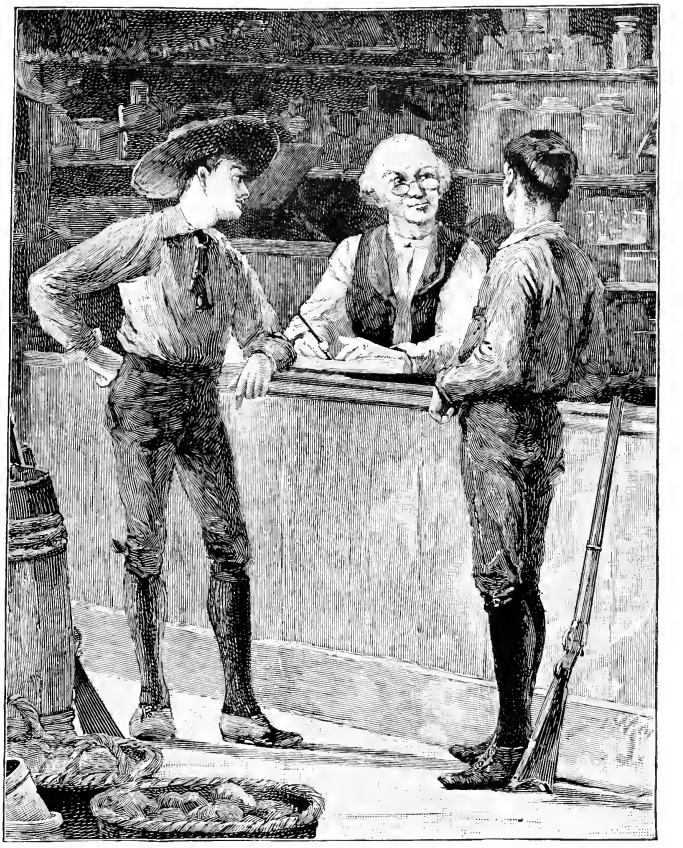
did not use. Not only was this easily arranged, but he rented them a boat as well. They learned from him that there was good boating for thirty miles up. There they would find the "Big Rip," a rapid they would have to "carry" round. Above that were other rapids, but they could pass them in the boat. Thirty-three miles up, the river forked. Here he advised them to establish their camp, for above that were five miles of successive falls and quick-water to where the main river emerged from a lake.

"Above the Forks," said the store-keeper, "is John Dant's country, where he lives the year round. Nobody else ever traps there. John is a real good fellow, and knows his business as well as any man living. He wouldn't care much for what you would catch, but he would care a good deal for what you would prevent him from getting by tramping about the country. He is up there now, and it may be as well for you to know how to find him in case anything happens and you need help. A plain trail comes out on the west bank of the east branch of the river about three hundred yards above the Forks. This will lead you to his camp on the lake. You can't miss it. You will find him almost any Sunday. At other times he may be away on his trapping lines."

In the first gray of the next morning the two boys loaded the boat, and taking the oars in turn every half-hour, proceeded up the river.

Neither had ever seen such a stream. Beyond the settlement it entered the forest like a tunnel, but little wider than an average city street from house to house. The water was dark brown, sluggish, and apparently bottomless. The abrupt banks were too high to enable them to look into the surrounding woods. Fallen trees, which storms or the washing away of the banks had thrown into the water, were passed at every few yards, some mere skeletons, some looking as though they had met their fate within the hour, while others leaned out over the stream tottering to their fall.

For some two hours they rowed on, always hoping that in the next of the many bends of the stream they would see large game, and keeping as silent as possible that no act of theirs might give

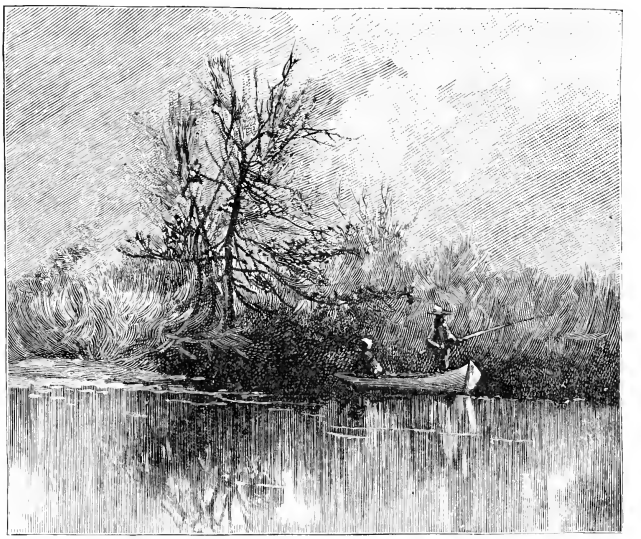


BUYING SUPPLIES.

it alarm and lose them a shot. As turn after turn was passed without result, expectation gradually changed into hope, and hope gave way to discouragement.

"This is not what you would call a really cheerful watercourse, Harry," said Dick, at last.

"Reminds me of the river Styx," replied Harry; and relaxing the caution of which they were both heartily tired, they began to



THE BOAT.

talk freely. It was just too soon. On opening the very next reach of the river, while Harry was in the middle of an earnest harangue, there were a splash and a crash, and a buck and doe vanished from a small grassy cove into the woods. Owing to repeated changes from oar to paddle, Harry's rifle was then with Dick in the stern of the boat, and Dick's shot-gun near Harry on the rowing seat. Warned of danger as the animals must have been by the noise

the boys made before they came in sight, even had each seized the weapon in reach, it is doubtful if he would have had time to fire except perhaps at random. But instead each jumped for his own gun, meeting midway, and almost spilling themselves and all their possessions into the river. By the time they were ready to fire, the animals were, by a moderate computation, about a mile away.

At noon they landed, ate a cold lunch brought from the settlement, and were soon off again. The river now changed in appearance. An alder swamp, dotted with elms, seemed to extend without limit east and west from either bank. Some current was now felt, and the stream narrowed and grew shallower. Through this they rowed hour after hour, until it seemed as though the end of the swamp had been lost. They were now not only depressed in spirit, but weary in body as well, and labored on in silence.

Rounding a sharp bend of the stream, Dick, who was steering, exclaimed, "Harry, just look there! What do you suppose that big mule is doing 'way up here?"

Harry turned. There sure enough was the long head of a brown animal furnished with enormous ears staring at them over the bushes, not twenty yards away. The boys stared at the animal, and the animal stared at the boys. Then like a flash it disappeared, and they heard it crash through the bushes in flight.

"That was a mighty timid mule, Dick," said Harry, at last.

"I wish I was as sure about the mule as I am that we are a couple of asses, Harry. I believe that was a moose."

"A moose! Why, it didn't have any horns."

"Cow-moose don't have horns. Why, we must be nearly thirty miles from the settlement. How could any tame mule get through all the woods and swamps between here and there? I tell you it was a cow-moose; I feel sure of it. We've had our chance, and lost it like a couple of idiots. It makes me sick. Everything seems to go wrong somehow. Let's camp at the first good place. I guess the Forks will wait for us until to-morrow."

At the head of the next bend they saw a wide pool, into which the river fell in quite a heavy rapid. At the foot of the pool was a small grassy island. They concluded they had reached the

"Big Rip." An abundance of drift-wood was lodged on the upper end of the island; so with wood and water close at hand, and plenty of grass for a bed, a better camping-place could hardly be hoped for.

Their tent was soon pitched. The next thing was a fire and supper. Assured by an obliging dealer that a camp stove (in which a lot of joints of stove-pipe, pots, kettles, and plates were packed like a Chinese puzzle) was indispensable to their welfare in the woods, they had bought it. An axe-head and its handle were hunted up. How they wished they had put them together before! but it was no use to think of that then.

"You put on the axe-head, Harry, and I will set up the stove, and try and make some bread or slapjacks. Which shall it be?"

"Oh, slapjacks are good — that is, if you know how to make them; and we've got plenty of maple sugar."

"I have never tried," said Dick, "but I suppose it's easy enough. It wouldn't have been a bad idea if we had taken a few lessons in cooking before we left the settlement, but I never thought of it."

"No more did I; but I guess we will get along somehow," replied Harry.

It was a longer job than they thought to get the axe-head fitted; but it was done at last. Then Harry advanced to the pile of drift-wood with all the confidence of youth and inexperience. He had seen others chop, and it seemed so simple that no doubt entered his mind but that he could cut all the wood they needed in a very few minutes. He attacked a log about six inches through. He chopped and rested, and chopped and rested again. Do what he would, he could not make the axe strike twice in the same place. Then he strove to make up for lack of skill by force of muscle. At last he gave it up. The log looked as though a rat had gnawed it, but it was still far from cut through.

"Oh, Dick! if we had only brought a saw! An axe isn't good for anything, anyway, except to split wood with. I've been doing my best at this log for nearly half an hour. At this rate we won't get wood enough for supper before morning."

"Never mind, Harry; try some of the small limbs. They will be better for the stove, anyway."

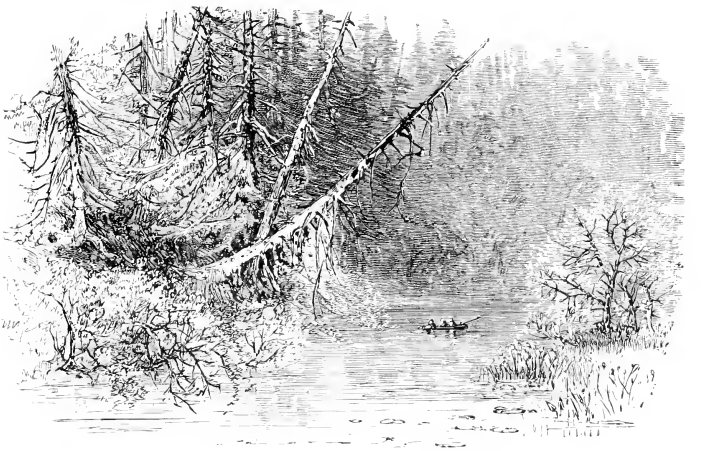
Thus a fire was at last had. In the mean time Dick had mixed up some flour, water, and salt, which he fondly thought would make his "slapjacks." He greased the frying-pan with a

HEAD OF COW MOOSE.

piece of pork, filled the teapot with water, threw into it a handful of tea, and put it on the stove.

"It will be dark soon, Harry. We ought to have brought a lantern. We shall have to make some kind of a camp-fire, or we sha'n't be able to see anything in a little while."

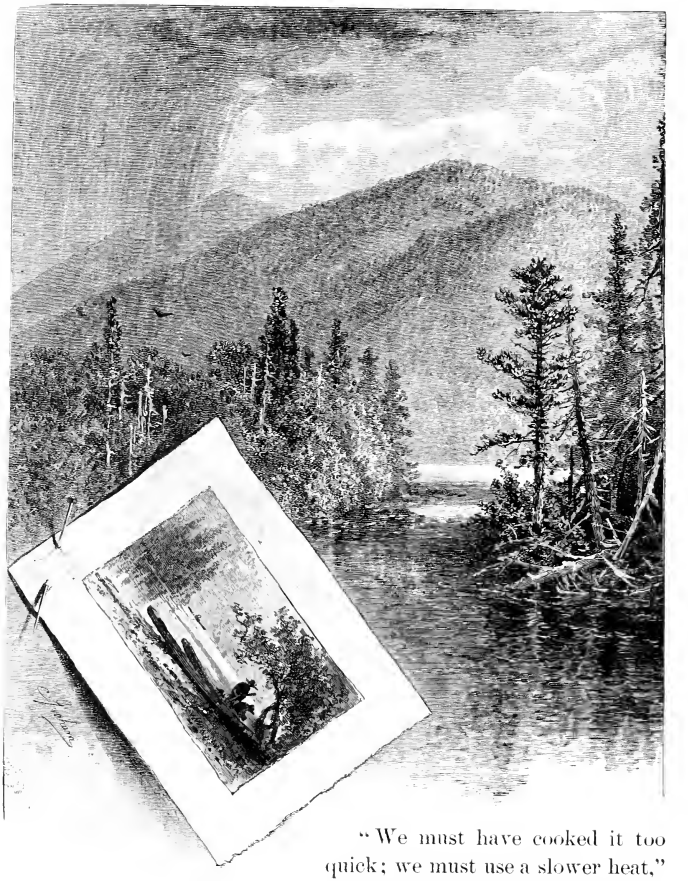
Everything else was dropped for this. They wasted no time with the axe, but pulled from the heap of drift-wood such pieces as they could handle, piled them together, and after much trouble made them burn. Then the cooking was resumed, for they were now as hungry as wolves. Dick poured a charge of his flour paste into the frying-pan, put it on the stove, and both watched the result with breathless interest. The mixture began to solidify. Dick picked up one corner, as he had seen the cook



ON THE RIVER.

do at home in making buckwheat cakes, and studied the underside. It did not look very hopeful, but it might eat better than it looked, so he turned it over to give the other side a chance. Soon that too seemed to have had all the fire it could well stand, and the so-called slapjack was put on a tin plate.

"We might as well eat it while it's hot, Harry." So the boys divided it, dosed it with maple syrup made from their sugar, and began. The first bite was enough. Though the outside was hard as leather, the inside was perfectly raw.



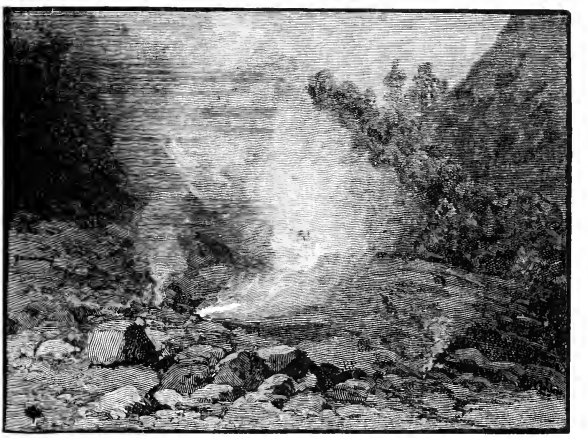
ANOTHER BEND.

"We must have cooked it too quick; we must use a slower heat," said Dick. And so they went on experimenting, first in one direction and then in another, with a hot fire, with a moderate fire, and with a weak fire. But do what they would, the result was simply uneatable, for of the necessity of baking-powder, or some-

thing of the kind to make the flour rise, they were utterly ignorant.

Suspicious now of everything, they tried their tea. It had boiled down till it was as bitter as gall.

"It seems to me I have seen tea made by heating the water and then putting the tea in," said Dick. "Suppose we try it that way, and not put in so much?"



AN ABANDONED CAMP-FIRE.

"I am ready to try anything different from what we have tried," said Harry. "I had no idea there was any trouble in cooking such simple things as we have. If you took the rest of the slapjack mix, and thinned it down well with water and then boiled it, don't you think it would have to cook?"

"We might as well try it," replied Dick. "We will have to do that, or boil some potatoes. There can't be any secret in boiling potatoes. Do you think there can?"

"I don't know," replied Harry. "I should have said there was no secret in making slapjacks. The flour will be quickest; so let's try that."

So they tried the flour. The result was burned considerably, and though it did not pamper their appetites much, still it could be swallowed. They began camp about five o'clock. It was nearly ten before they had finished eating. No dishes were washed. "Wouldn't they have to be used again in the morning?"

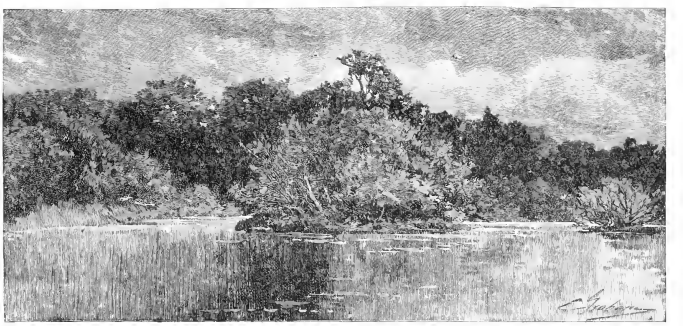
With hearts like lead, and in perfect silence, the boys folded up their coats to serve as pillows, and rolled themselves in their blankets within the tent for the night. Tired as they were from their long day's work, sleep came but tardily to their relief. It was all so strange, so lonely! Except for the roar of the river in the rapid above, no sound could be heard. Even the wind was still. But fatigue at last overcame their despondency, and they slept. How long they had slept they could not tell, when a shriek rang out through the quiet night which brought the boys into a sitting posture in an instant. Dazed by their sudden awaking, each could ask the other in startled whisper, "What was that?" but neither could reply or indeed assign a cause for the horror which thrilled him. That something dreadful had happened they knew, since it had aroused them both; but what it might be neither could tell. They had not long to await a solution. Again the shriek rang out, so loud, so near, so appalling in character, that it seemed to freeze their very blood.

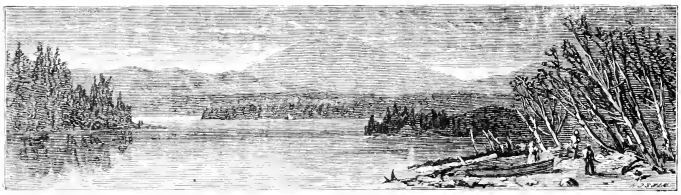
For a moment the boys fairly gasped for breath. Then Dick whispered, "For Heaven's sake, Harry, what's that?" Harry's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with terror, and it was only after some effort that he managed to reply, "I don't know—I guess it must be a panther." "It sounds like the shriek of something dreadful," said Dick; "but if it is a panther, let us stand to our guns and prepare to defend ourselves. Oh, how dark it is! If we had only brought a lantern!" It was indeed dark within the tent, and more by the sense of feeling than of sight the boys buckled on their knives and revolvers and found their guns. This done, they again relapsed into silence, both anxiously awaiting, yet with dread, a renewal of the sound which had so startled them.

Again it came, this time evidently not quite so near. "This will never do, Dick," whispered Harry; "we might be attacked here

before we had a chance to use our guns, and then it is so dark that if we did have time we would be almost sure to miss or shoot one another. It is plain it is not on the island, and I've heard panthers don't like to cross water. We must go outside and stir up the fire. Then if anything does come we can at least stand some kind of a chance to do something." It was with trembling fingers they loosened the flap of the tent. A few smouldering embers and unconsumed brands only were left of the fire, and these Harry proceeded with nervous haste to collect and fan into flame, while Dick stood guard over him with his loaded gun at full cock. The fire having been coaxed into new life and well replenished with fuel, the boys resumed their watch. For an hour or more it lasted without result, nothing but the roar of the stream and the soughing of the wind through the trees breaking the stillness of the night.

"It must be gone now, whatever it was," said Dick, at last. "Let's build up the fire again with lots of wood, and try to sleep once more." They did so, and though not again disturbed, their sleep was fitful and unrefreshing.



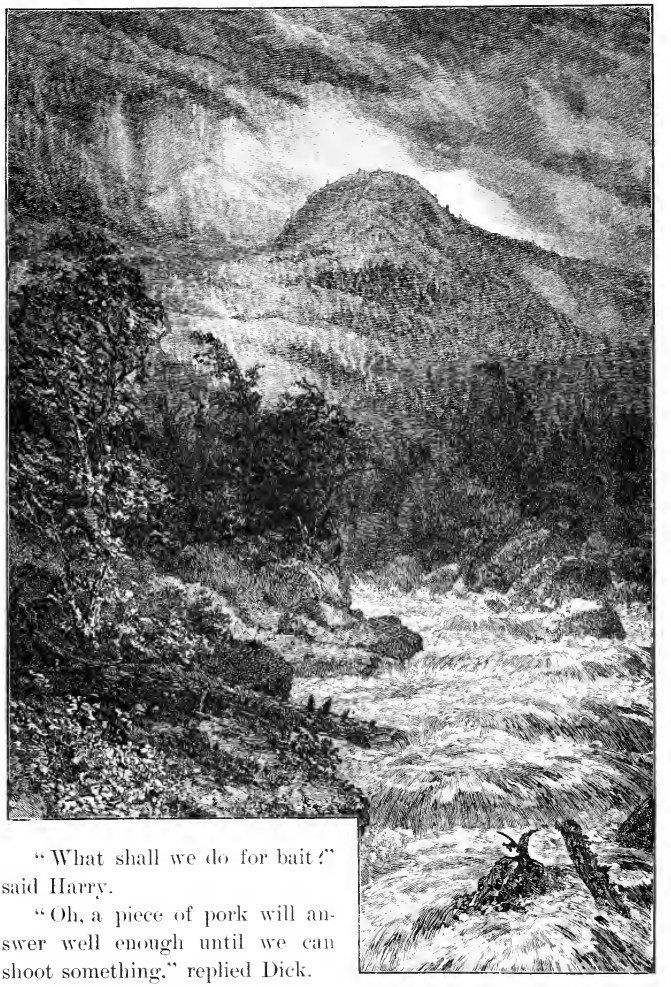


CHAPTER III.

Breakfast.—The Traps are Set.—Passing the "Big Rip."—Disaster.—John Dant, the Trapper.—"He who aims all over [an animal] don't stand much chance of hitting anywhere in particular."

WHEN morning at last came to them, the boys concluded to try boiled potatoes for breakfast, and having started a fire and put them on to cook, they awaited the result with anxious impatience. Though neither spoke, each thought of home with a sigh of regret, and of the good breakfast that always had awaited him there as soon as dressed. Nor strive as they would, could they altogether avoid the reflection that if in the future it took them five hours to cook one meal, as it had done the night before, even if they contented themselves with two meals a day, the hours of daylight which they would be able to devote to hunting and trapping would be few indeed. But though the outlook was none of the brightest, still the boys were by no means devoid of pluck. If the idea of abandoning their enterprise did occur to either, he kept it quite to himself.

"There's no use in watching that pot boil, Harry," said Dick, after some time had been thus spent. "Let's jam the stove full of wood, and go ashore and set our traps. We can't be more than two or three miles from the Forks, and we ought not to lose any chance of fur, or we may not have money enough to get home with."



THE "BIG RIP."

"What shall we do for bait?" said Harry.

"Oh, a piece of pork will answer well enough until we can shoot something," replied Dick.

So they took their dozen traps,

and carefully tied a small piece of pork to the trencher (the platform pressure upon which springs the trap) of each. Then, landing, they proceeded up the river, setting a trap wherever they saw a convenient root or tree to chain the trap to. They found a steel trap a lively article to handle, and quite indifferent whether it nipped boy or game.

"It's going to be an awful job to carry all our things and the boat around that rapid, Dick. Let's look it over on our way back to camp, and see if we can't get the boat up somehow with her load in her."

"I'm in favor of that if it's possible," replied Dick. "It's bad enough to get yourself through these bushes without carrying anything. One thing I have made up my mind to: If this bowie-knife and revolver want to go through these woods any more with me, they must carry themselves, for I won't. They weigh about a ton around my waist, and catch in every bush I pass."

"But, Dick, suppose we get a moose, and want to skin it?"

"If we get near enough to a moose to put a knife in him, I don't think he will be so impatient to be skinned that he won't wait till I can go for my knife. As soon as I get to camp, off this belt comes, and off it will stay until I see more use for this knife and pistol than I have seen so far."

They found the rapid neither very long nor the water very deep, though it was quite rough.

"I think we can do it," said Harry.

"We'll try it anyway," replied Dick. "We can take off our drawers and pantaloons, and wade the boat up. We will have to keep our shoes on, though, the bottom is so stony. But we've got another pair that we can put on till these are dry."

They found their potatoes boiled to pieces when they reached camp, but it was no time to be particular. They satisfied their appetites as best they could, and reloading the boat, reached the foot of the rapid.

Here they made the changes in their dress that Dick had suggested, and proceeded "to wade" the boat up-stream. It hung back hard. Again and again it ran upon sunken stones, but still they

made progress. The smooth water above was at last close at hand. They were now almost exhausted with their efforts. Then the boat stuck on a rock, and in trying to get it off, Dick lost his footing; Harry, starting to help him, let go of the boat. Instantly the bow swung round with the current, the stern slid off the rock, and the boat was swept down-stream broadside to. It struck heavily again

THEY PROCEEDED "TO WADE" THE BOAT UP-STREAM.

and again, but it still remained right side up. It was nearly at the foot of the rapid, and all might yet have been well, when it encountered a rock with tremendous force, rolled over and over, and disappeared in the pool.

The boys stood as though petrified until after the catastrophe. Then, when they saw their all vanish before their eyes, they sought the bank, and burst into tears.

Half starved, broken down with unaccustomed fatigue, without food, and without the means of procuring either food or fire, they were alone, half naked, in the trackless wilderness. No wonder they were overcome.

"Oh, Harry, what shall we do?—what *shall* we do? We can never walk back to the settlement through these woods. Why, oh, why did we not carry around the rapid, as the store-keeper advised?"

Nothing could have been better timed. Stung by the implied reproach, since his suggestion had brought the accident about, Harry gathered his wits together and regained his resolution.

"It's hard luck, Dick, but it won't do us any good to cry over it. As you say, we could never find our way back through the woods, even if we did not starve on the road. We must find that Dant's camp. The store-keeper said he was a good fellow. If he is there, he cannot refuse to help us. If he is not, we must take possession, and make it right with him the best way we can when he comes back."

Wading the river when they could, and following the bank where they could not, the trail was at last found. Spurred by the dread of a night in the woods without fire in their present condition, and mindful of the alarm of the preceding night, they hastened on, stopping only when rest became absolutely necessary. At last the forest looked thinner before them. Then came a sound which riveted them to the spot. Yes, there could be no mistake; it was the sound of an axe, and at no great distance.

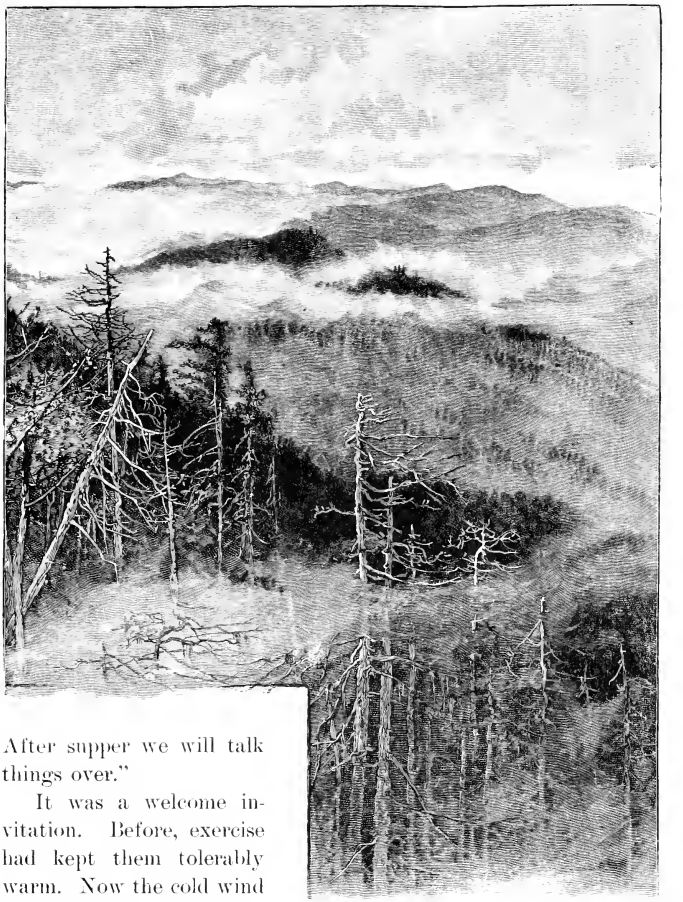
A few moments later, as the boys burst out of the woods, a man stepped from behind a bush, rifle in hand.

Running up to him, Dick asked, "Are you Mr. Dant?" and without waiting for an answer: "The store-keeper at the settlement said you were a real good fellow, and if we got into trouble to come to you. We've lost all we had, even our money, but—"

"We don't help people in trouble for money in this country, my boy," broke in Dant. "I heard you coming, and I thought I was in for a caribou instead of such a visit as this. You are welcome, though. Was there anybody else in your party?"

"No; there were only we two," replied Harry.

"That's all right, then. I never bother about trouble until after supper, unless it's pressing. I see you're wet, and hungry too, I suppose. Come into my cabin and get on some dry clothes.

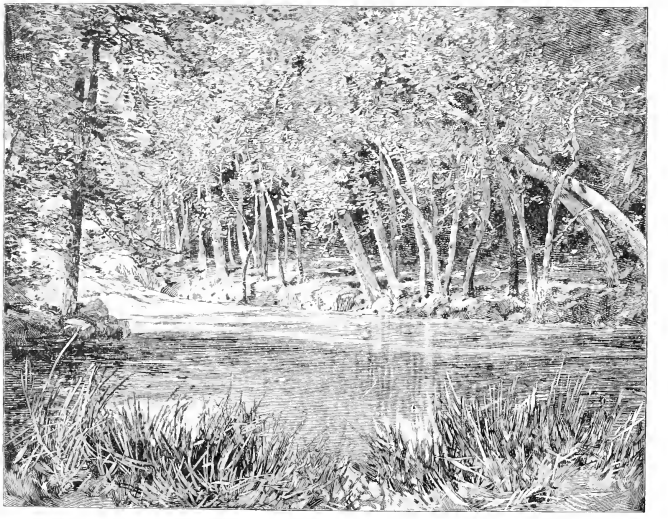


IN THE TRACKLESS WILDERNESS.

After supper we will talk things over."

It was a welcome invitation. Before, exercise had kept them tolerably warm. Now the cold wind from the lake seemed to pierce their very bones. It was only a rough log-hut, but then it was dry and warm. A fire burned in an open stone

fireplace on one side of the single room, opposite to which was a rude bunk some ten feet wide, covered with evergreen boughs. A



THE FORKS.

table of hewn planks built against the side of the cabin and a few stools completed the furniture.

The trapper stirred the fire into a bright blaze, and then pulled some clothes from a shelf. "Here, boys, are a couple of warm undershirts and drawers, and two pairs of stockings. I have only one extra pair of pants; you will have to draw lots for them. Now climb out of those wet clothes and get into these dry ones as soon as you can."

In a few moments he had their wet things steaming before the fire, and began to prepare for supper.

"Now we are dry, can't we help you, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry.

"Oh yes, you can help me first-rate if you will. Just pull up

those stools and sit down and watch that fire burn. That's all I want you to do till after supper."

So the boys watched the fire, and studied their host. He was rather a tall spare man, with short dark hair, keen brown eyes, a long straight nose, rather a wide thin-lipped mouth, and a square chin with a big dent in its middle. A gray flannel shirt, gray trousers upheld by suspenders, short, heavy yarn stockings, into which the bottoms of his trousers were tucked, and low cowhide shoes completed his dress. Where were the buckskin hunting shirt and fringed leggings, the bowie-knife and revolver, and the rough sententious conversation interlarded with quaint oaths, which they had supposed characterized the true trapper?

If in anything he differed from the farmers of the settlement in appearance, it was in a certain alertness of manner, and in that his language seemed better chosen. Everything he did seemed to accomplish a result, and a good supper, including plenty of fresh meat,

"ARE YOU MR. DANT?"

was ready in less time than it had taken the boys to make a fire. Though little or nothing of the ideal trapper appeared in their host, long before supper had been eaten he had won their entire confidence and esteem. When supper was finished, the dishes washed, and all preparations for the night were completed, but not till then, he lit his pipe, threw himself on the bunk, and said, "Now, boys, tell us all about it."

He was soon in possession of their whole story—how they had started out with a boat-load of provisions, their unfortunate attempts at cooking, and finally the accident which had lost them their whole outfit and thrown them upon the charity of their present host.

At but one part did he show his sense of the absurdity of the whole performance. Their effort at trapping called up a broad grin of surprise and amusement. The whole story, where the traps were set, how fastened, how baited—all had to be told in answer to his questions.

"And what did you set them for, boys?" he at last asked.

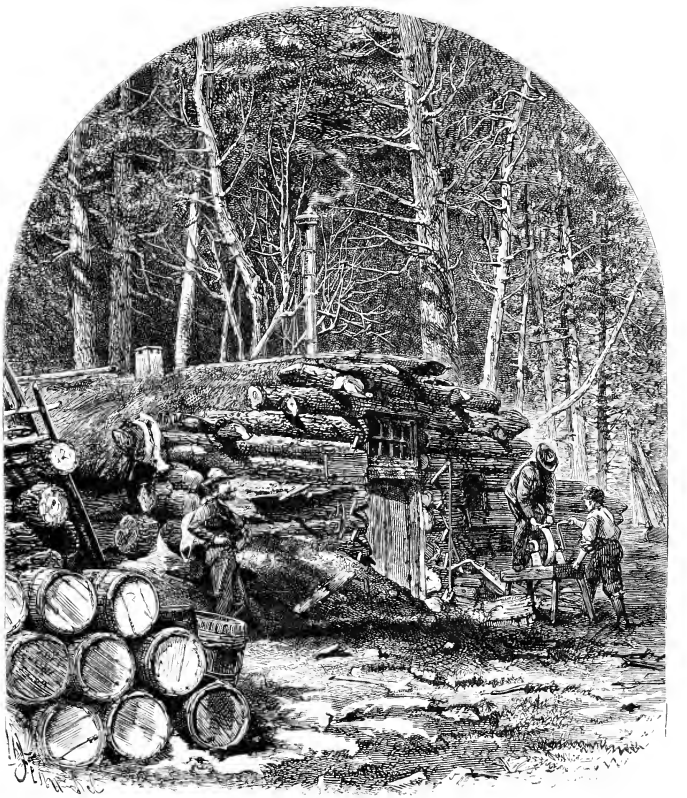
"Set them for?" replied Harry. "Why, we set them for anything that would come along. Isn't that the way you do?"

"Well, no; not exactly. Every animal has its peculiar habits, and if you don't set your traps accordingly, you might as well let it alone. You won't get anything. Your answer reminds me of a gentleman who came up here a couple of years ago crazy to shoot a moose. I did the best I could for him, but he was so fidgety and uneasy, always just at the wrong time, that when we came across one he scared it off before we could get a shot. After a while he had lost so many good chances that I was pretty well discouraged. At last we were coming down the river in my boat. I was paddling, and he was in the bow—a big double-barrelled shot-gun, first cousin to a cannon, lying across his lap. About half an hour before he had scared a caribou out of a year's growth, as usual without getting a shot. We were both doing a powerful deal of thinking, and his everlasting tongue was still for once.

"We rounded a point, and there was as nice a bull-moose as ever I saw standing mid-leg deep in the water. We had caught it in the

very act of crossing the river. There could not be a better chance. He gaped at it as if it was his grandfather's ghost, his mouth wide open, and his eyes bulging right out of his head. A bull-moose is a big animal anyway, and I suppose it looked to him about twenty feet high—at any rate, he acted as if it did.

"By this time the moose had seen all he wanted to of us, and



A TRAPPER'S CAMP.

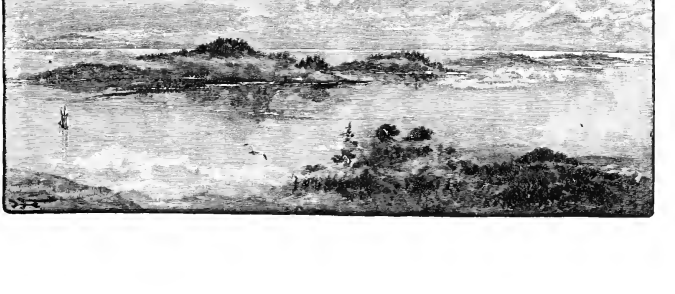
was leaving for the woods, not on the run, but moving off on a quick walk. When I first saw it, I thought it was our meat sure, but now I began to be anxious. I whispered to him, 'Shoot! why don't you shoot?' This waked him. He up with that cannon of his and banged away both barrels, a half a fistful of buckshot in each load, and never touched a hair of the animal, though it wasn't forty yards away.

"I was disgusted clear through, and mighty mad, though I had no right to be, since he paid me for my time, so it was his loss and not mine. 'Where on earth did you aim at that moose?' I asked him, in a way that I guess told him pretty plainly what I thought of the performance.

"'Where did I aim?' he said. 'Why, I aimed at him all over.'

"You see that a person who aims all over the universe don't stand much chance of hitting anywhere in particular, and that's just as true of trapping as of hunting.

"Well, boys, it's getting late for the woods. I guess we had better call it a day, and go to sleep now. To-morrow we'll see what can be done."



CHAPTER IV.

To the Scene of Disaster.—The Cause of the Night Alarm.—Running a Rapid.—Nothing saved from the Wreck.—"What shall we do?"—A Timely Invitation.—The "Timid Mule" again.—A Hint on Trapping.—Poling up the "Big Rip."

"TURN out! turn out! Breakfast will be ready in five minutes!" awoke the boys.

"Is it morning already?" exclaimed Harry. "It does not seem as if I had been asleep more than half an hour."

"We generally call it morning in this country after the sun begins to shine. I'd let you sleep till you were sick of it, but it's been raining like shot all night, and the river will be booming. If we are to save any of your stuff we must be quick about it. In the woods you can never pay any attention to comfort as long as work is to be done."

Breakfast over, they started together for the scene of the disaster.

For some time anxiety as to the result kept the boys silent. At last Dick said, "Mr. Dant, you did not tell us last night what it was that frightened us so when we were camped on the island. Did you ever hear anything like it?"

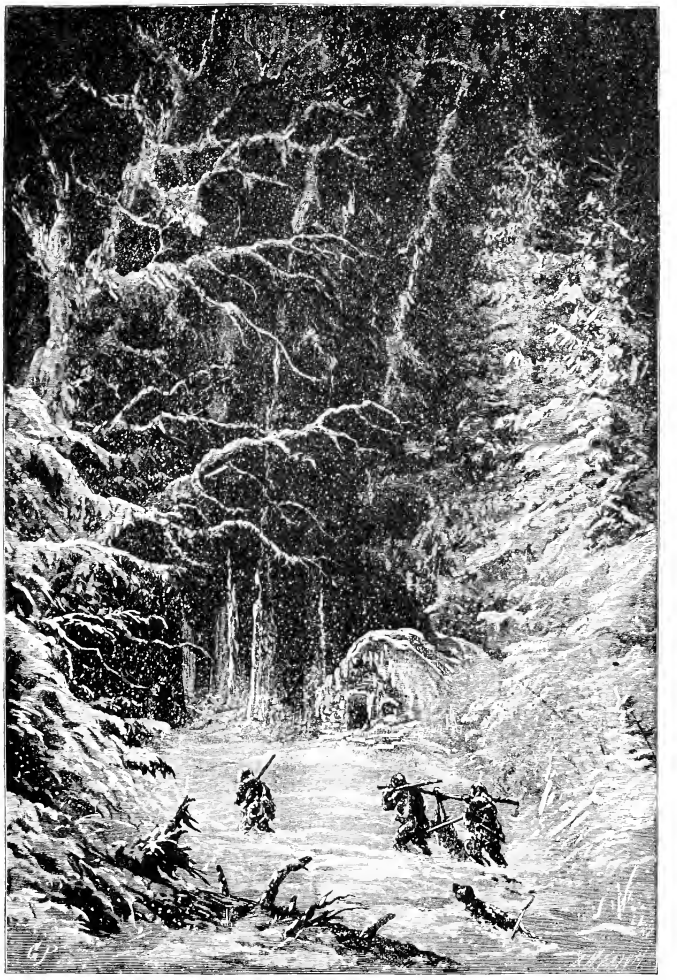
"I? Oh yes, plenty of times. I was off last year after caribou with a city gentleman. He was a very nice man—a real gentleman;

though, like most city men in the woods, he had more pluck than discretion. He seemed to think a good deal of stuff I should have left in the home-camp absolutely indispensable, so there was nothing to do but take it along. When he saw me making up my pack—and it was a big one, more than any one man ought to lug—he was just eaten up with ambition, and insisted on carrying a pack himself and taking half the load in it. Well, I knew he couldn't do it, for making your way through these woods where there is no trail is itself pretty hard on a man who is only accustomed to clear and level walking. Then, too, lugging a pack even over the best of travelling is very distressing to a person who isn't used to it. But the two together I knew he couldn't do, though he was a pretty able-bodied man, too. So I had to fool him a little on the packs. I put the light and bulky things into his, and in such a way as to make it look as big and fat as possible, while I shoved all the heavy articles into my pack, making it up to look as much smaller than his as I well could, though that wasn't much.

"Well, we started off, he with about twenty pounds on his back and his rifle in his hands, while I had about seventy-five pounds and my axe.

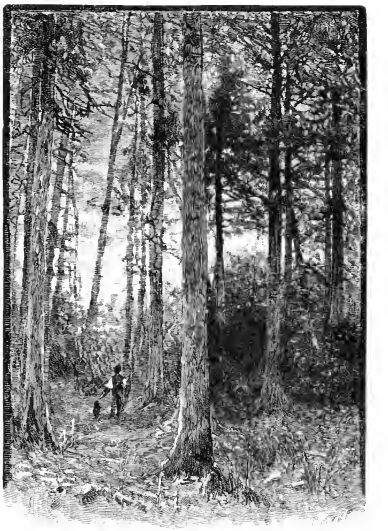
"It came along towards night, and, just as I expected, we hadn't covered much more than half the distance we ought; so I told him we'd have to camp. It didn't take me long to put up a lean-to, using fir-boughs for the roof, back, and sides, and leaving it open towards the fire. While I was doing this, I made him go down to a brook which ran before the camp, wash all over, and put on dry underclothes, for he was wringing wet with perspiration. You see we have to look out for these city people mighty sharp. They can't stand much exposure, though they think they can; and I knew if he stood about with his wet clothes on he would soon get chilled, and then I might have a sick man on my hands.

"Well, to make a long story short, I made him up a nice bed of fir-boughs, and after we had had supper and smoked a while, he dropped off asleep. As for myself, I hadn't time to make any bed, but just lay down beside him on the bare ground and wrapped my-



SNOWED IN FOR THE WINTER.

self up in a single blanket, which was all I could carry for my own use because he had such a lot of stuff. It was a real cold night, and some time after midnight I waked pretty near frozen. So I got up to mend the fire. My rattling about the logs half awakened him, and just then the same noise you heard rang out from the woods not a hundred feet from us. You ought to have seen him. I thought he would fairly go through the roof, he jumped so; and for ten minutes afterwards his nerves were so shaken that he was all of a tremble. Not that he was a coward, but to be waked out of a sound sleep in such a wild and lonely place, with a noise like the screams of ten devils ringing in your ears, is apt to shake any one's nerves, as I suppose you yourselves found out."



ON THE TRAIL.

"Yes," said Dick. "But you haven't told us what it was. Was it a panther?"

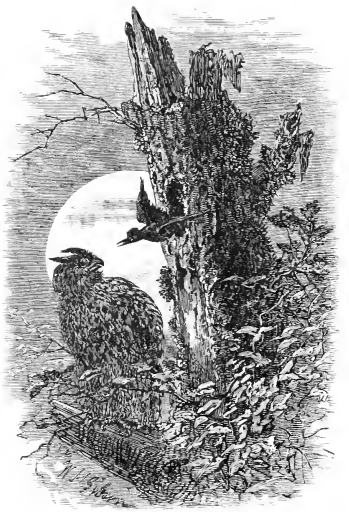
"Oh no, it wasn't any panther. Though I've heard two or three persons say they have seen panthers in these woods, I think they must have been mistaken, for after all these years I have been knocking around here, summer and winter, I have never seen one nor the trail of one. It seems to me as if I must have come across some sign, particularly on the snow in winter, if there were any here."

"Well, what was it, Mr. Dant?" said Harry.

"It was a screech-owl."

"A screech-owl! Why, it screamed like a locomotive."

"If you had said it screamed like four locomotives," replied the trapper, "you would hardly have exaggerated the effect it produces in these still woods at night. It seems strange that a bird hardly bigger than my two fists can let out a howl the size of a good big house. But such is the fact. If an elephant could make here in these woods a noise as loud in proportion to its size as a screech-owl can, it would pretty near make the windows rattle in New York City.



A SCREECH-OWL.

"But here we are at the river. You wait a few minutes while I get my boat. I won't be gone long."

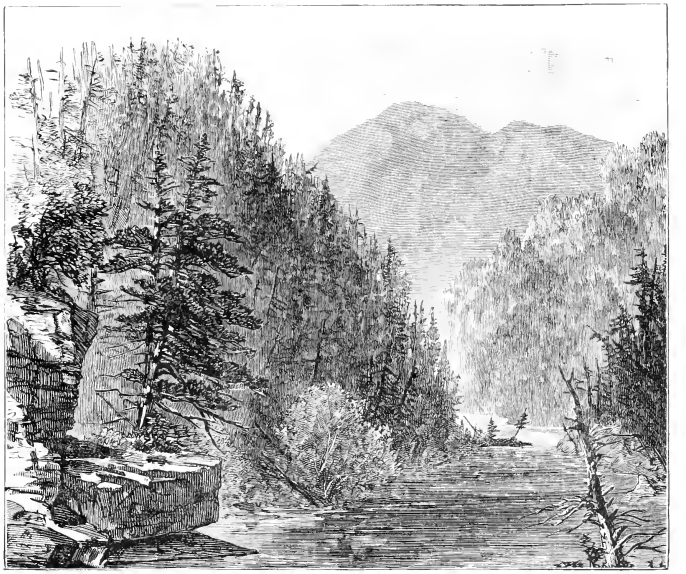
He was as good as his word, and soon returned with the boat, in which all embarked and pushed off from the bank. It took but a short time with the aid of the current to reach the head of the "Big Rip," the scene of their disaster. As the trapper said would be the case, the river had risen considerably, and the eyes of the boys rested on a very wild piece of water. After their late experience, they looked upon it with great respect.

"Can't we help you carry the boat around?" said Harry.

"Carry the boat around! What for? Oh no! There is no trouble in running that rapid. The water itself shows where to go. Do you see that smooth tongue running into the rough water? That's where the best of it is. Nature generally tells what to do if you can only understand her. If I were a stranger here I might drop the boat down on a pole, as we call it; that is, use my pole as a brake and let her down slowly. But I know this place

like a book, and if you will only sit perfectly still, no matter how dangerous it may look, we will go through all right."

But little was saved from the boys' wreck. Their boat was found, an old and rotten one disguised with a fresh coat of paint, but stove and ruined beyond repair. Harry's pantaloons were, however, recovered, hung by the suspenders to a snag, the legs swinging and kicking about in the fierce current as though endowed with life. How Harry wished he had not placed his money for safe keeping in his valise, which, well weighted with ammunition, now reposed on the bottom of the deep pool at the foot of the rapid.



ABOVE THE FORKS.

At last and with reluctance the boys were forced to admit that no further salvage could be looked for. So this was to be the outcome of the expedition they had planned so long and with such

care and hope. All preceding inconvenience and discomfort was forgotten and overshadowed by the recollection of the great disaster, which had brought ruin upon them in an instant and beyond the possibility of repair.

Nor was this all. As they gazed at one another with blank faces and quivering lips, the magnitude of their misfortune and its consequences seemed to grow with every moment's thought. The past, disastrous as it was, shrank into insignificance before the awful problem of the future. Many miles intervened between them and the nearest settlement, miles of trackless swamp and forest, a labyrinth in which no friendly sign would direct their way; in which to wander was to be lost, and in which to be lost was to perish miserably. And if they should, despite this, reach the settlement, they were without food, money, or even clothing sufficient for the greater distance which would still separate them from home.

The keen eye of the trapper read their troubled faces as the scholar reads an open book, and his kind heart stirred within him.

"There, boys, it's no use crying over spilled milk. What's done is done, and can't be helped. What *is to be done* is now the thing for us to wrestle with."

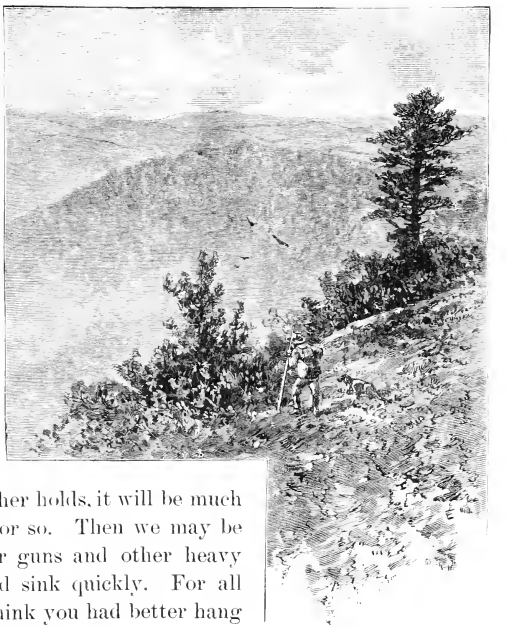
"But what can we do, Mr. Dant?" replied Harry. "How far is it to the settlement through the woods, and how are we to find our way?"

"Well, it might be fifty miles and it might be any distance, according to the way you happened to take to get there. The river knows the way, and if you could follow it and stick to it, of course you would come to the settlement at last. But you can't. You would meet dozens of swamps and bog-holes which you couldn't cross, and in trying to work round them you would be certain, sooner or later, to miss your reckoning and get lost; and if you once did get lost, you might wander through these woods till you dropped, and never meet a living soul. No, no; I couldn't think of letting you try it, for there would be ten chances of its costing you your lives to one of your pulling through. If you must go down to the settlement, there's nothing for me to do but to go with you. When I heard the rain last night, I felt pretty sure we would save little of

your stuff, so I have been thinking things over some. I suppose you hardly want to go right home without a thing to show for your trip, except that you went all to pieces at its very beginning?"

"No, we don't," said Dick.

"Well, October is one of the best months we have in the woods. This good weather may hold for two weeks or more. Suppose you come back and put in the time with me, till the weather shows signs of breaking. Then I can take you down to the settlement. I've got to go there anyway before I am snowed in for the winter, and I might as well go then as any time. Besides, the river is pretty well up now. If this good weather holds, it will be much lower in a week or so. Then we may be able to find your guns and other heavy things that would sink quickly. For all these reasons I think you had better hang on with me for a while."



MILES OF SWAMP AND TRACKLESS FOREST.

"It's very good of you, Mr. Daut, but we ought not to do it unless you will let us make some return for your time and trouble and for our board," said Dick.

"I asked you, boys, for the sake of your company, and not to make anything out of you. What little store goods you will eat

won't hurt me much, I guess. The truth is, there isn't anything else for you to do, so you might just as well make up your minds to it. You can be sure of a hearty welcome."

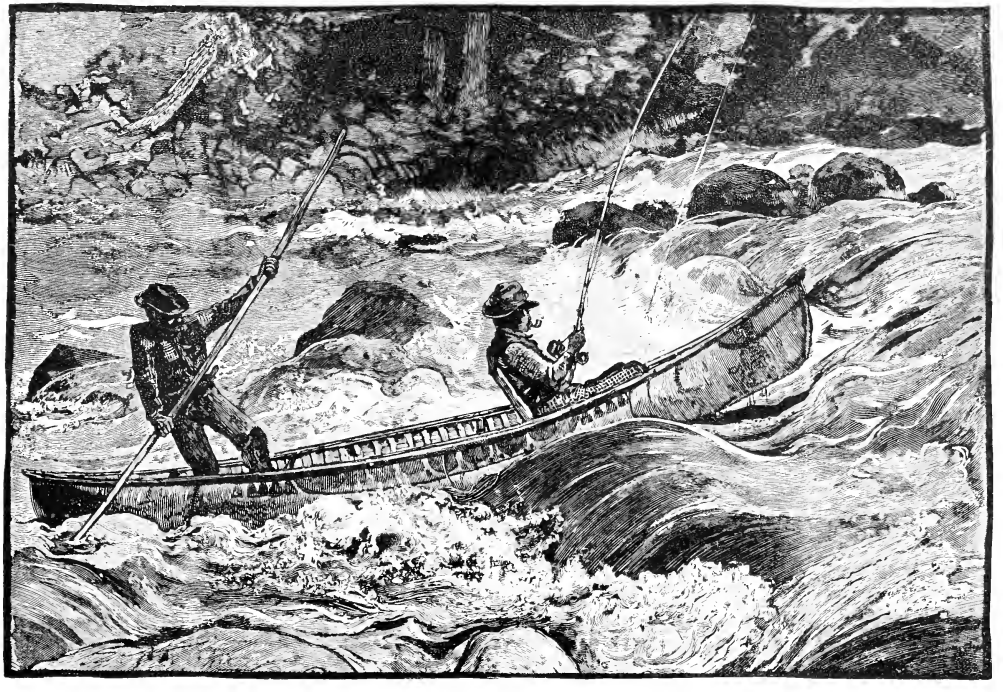
"We can't pay Mr. Dant for his kindness, Dick," said Harry, "that's sure. But our fathers are neither poor nor mean men. I feel sure they will repay him for any expense his generosity puts him to, if he will only wait till we can get home and tell them about it."

"There is no doubt about that, Harry, and they will thank him too. But it seems a little cool for us to drop down, as it were out of the sky, upon an entire stranger, and throw ourselves on his hands for board and lodging like a couple of tramps, particularly when it will cost him so much time and trouble to make good from the settlement the inroads we shall make on his winter's stock of provisions."

"You may have been strangers yesterday, boys, but you are not now," replied the trapper; "and if I am not very much out, we will be friends, and pretty warm friends, too, before many days have passed. You may take it any way to suit yourselves. If you choose to, and can repay me, well and good. If you can't, well and good too. You will be quite welcome either way—that you may be sure of. So let's consider the matter settled, take up your traps, and get back to camp."

As they were going to the traps, Harry said, "I wish I could get such a chance at a moose as that gentleman had you told us about last night. I don't think I would make such a fool of myself."

"H'm! Well, perhaps not; but I would not be too sure of it. You've seen plenty of countrymen in the city gaping in the store-windows and at the crowd, I suppose, and perhaps you've seen landsmen at sea for the first time. Every man has some place in the world in which he is good for something, and there are other places where he isn't worth a cent. Really I suppose we ought not to laugh as we do at the greenhorns who come up here, though the things they do and don't do are wonderful to see. I suppose the laugh would be on the other side if they had us in a city."



POLING UP A RAPID.

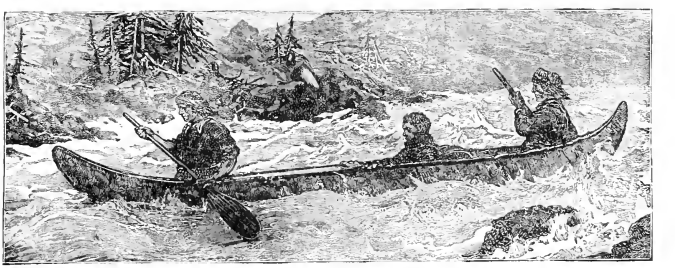
"I am not sure but what we had nearly as good a chance on our way up," said Dick; "and if we did, we didn't distinguish ourselves much more than that gentleman."

"How was that?" and soon the trapper had the whole story of the timid mule.

"Well, boys, that was a cow-moose, sure enough. You're not the first I have known to make the same mistake."

"Oh, Mr. Dant, do you suppose it is possible for us to get another chance at a moose? I should so like to have something to talk about besides our shipwreck when we get home," said Harry.

"I don't know, I'm sure; but if you will do just what I tell you,



RUNNING A RAPID.

and work hard, I will see what can be done. Now, where are the traps?"

They came to one. There it lay, bare and in plain sight, chained fast to a thick root, the piece of pork still tied to the trencher. Nothing had disturbed it. It was with no great pleasure that the boys saw the look of amusement that spread over the trapper's face as he stopped before it.

"Isn't that the way you do it, Mr. Dant?" said Dick.

"Well, scarcely. It's humane, perhaps, to try to catch your animals by the head, and so kill them quick. But there is one trouble about that way of setting a trap. No animal will go near it.

Good trappers, except for sable and fisher, seldom use bait at all; and when they do they don't put it on the trap, but beyond it, and arrange things so that the animal must step into the trap to get the bait. The trap they cover out of sight. I'll show you something about it to-morrow."

The traps were all gathered, and brought to the boat, which had been left beside the bank at the foot of the rapid.

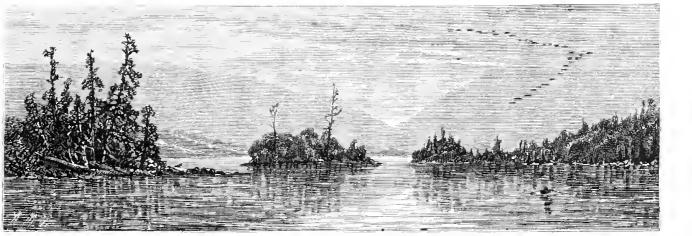
"Now, boys, you walk around to the head of the rapid, and I will pole the boat up and take you in there," said the trapper.

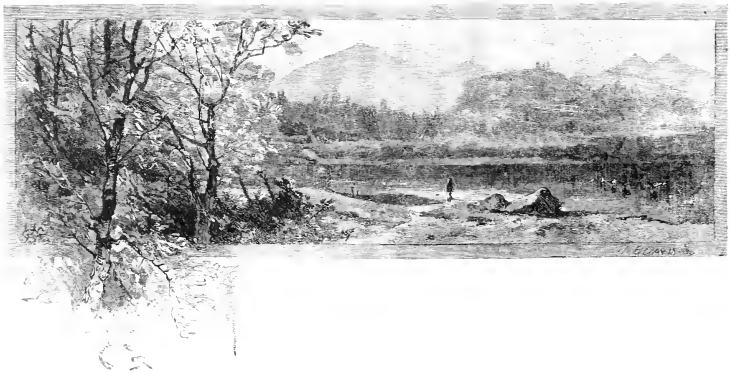
"You don't mean to say you can force a boat up such an awful current as this! Why, it's right uphill!" said Dick.

"That's what I thought of doing. So long as there are no regular up and down falls, and the water isn't too deep to get bottom readily with a pole, a boat can be made to do almost anything; that is, if the man who handles it knows his business."

The boys landed, and made their way through the bushes which bordered the stream to a point where a good view could be had of the rapid. There they stopped by common consent to witness the struggle, not without some lurking expectation of seeing a repetition of their own mishap. The trapper pushed from the bank and paddled to the foot of the quick water. Then, pole in hand, he rose to his feet, standing near the stern of the boat. A quick and strong push forced it into the turmoil. The boys could not but admire the alert glance, the firm-set mouth, and the unstudied grace of his poise as he stood erect in that cockle-shell of a boat amid the foaming water—a position either of them would have been reluctant to take and maintain even on the placid pool. The water boiled up under the bow of the boat and hissed by its side as it hung there, in appearance as motionless as any of the rocks over which the torrent foamed. Then the trapper threw his weight upon the pole, and the boat began to move. Up, up, inch by inch, it seemed to the boys fairly to climb the raging slope; slowly, it is true, but still to climb. Then like lightning the pole was withdrawn and a fresh hold was taken on the bottom, and again the reluctant boat began to mount. Sometimes it would seem to the boys to hang motionless amid a smother of foam, some-

times to lose ground, as though the forces of the current were about to triumph, or had triumphed, over the power of the man; but these were moments of but apparent uncertainty and of short duration. At no time more than when he paused or dropped back was the trapper a surer master of the situation. He but adjusted the bow to a change of the direction of advance, and when the change was made to his satisfaction the boat began again to mount upward, until at last it floated safely in the more placid water above and the rapid was overcome.





CHAPTER V.

Preparing for a Tramp.—Laying out a Sable-line.—Trapping Sable and Fisher.

ANOTHER day dawned after another night of that sweet and dreamless sleep which healthful bodily fatigue alone insures. Indeed, "Tumble out, boys! tumble out! Breakfast will be ready in five minutes!" again aroused them to consciousness.

During breakfast the trapper stated his plans for the day. "To-day, boys, we will lay out a new sable-line to the south-west, and scatter the proper number of traps along it, all ready to set when the time comes.

"This will take us to the West Branch, which comes into the main river at the Forks. We will follow it up in a northerly direction a couple of miles, dropping a mink-trap here and there, when we will strike an old sable-line of mine, which we will follow back through the woods to camp, and look out for that line, too. That's the way we always lay out our trapping lines, for then we can go out in the morning in one direction and return at night in another, always over fresh ground; while the hope of finding something worth while in the next trap gives a friendly boost over the windfalls and through the thickets as the day draws on, and makes the

IN THE WOODS.

path seem easy and the way short. If you are willing to help we can easily do it in a day, but we must each take a back-load."

The boys were not only willing to be of any service they could, but were full of curiosity to see how trapping was done by a master of the art, as Dant unquestionably was. He produced two well-worn leather knapsacks and a pack-basket, and while loading them explained to the boys what he was doing and why he did it.

"In travelling through the woods nothing is meaner than hand-bundles. At least one hand is needed to keep the bushes out of your face and to help you over and under the windfalls, which, as you have already found out, must be passed in some way every few rods. So a woodsman carries all that he has to carry, as far as he can, in a pack on his back.

"For this purpose one of these leather knapsacks is the best thing—not those flimsy shams of canvas or shoddy leather they sell in the cities, that won't stand water, and are so hung to their narrow shoulder-straps that they pretty near cut a man's arms off before half a day's travel is over. They are good for nothing. A pack-basket is pretty fair, but not as good as a knapsack, because it doesn't sit so close to the back and it's harder to keep your balance. If you stumble and slip with a knapsack, it sticks to you, and you can catch yourself again; but if with a pack-basket, it swings off to one side and throws you more out of balance than you were before.

"Now, there is just as much art in making up a pack as there is in putting a saddle on a horse so that it will ride easy and not gall him.

"You see, I first fold this single blanket and put it inside so that it will form a back-cushion.

"Now I pile in the traps, making them pack as long and thin as I can, and turning the sharp corners away from the back-cushion as much as possible. Traps are a mean kind of a back-load, do what you will, for they will not stay in good shape no matter how well they are packed at the start; and they are all hard ends, uncommonly fond of hunting out and burrowing in the tender places in a fellow's back.

"Now I will put some tea and meat and bread in my pack, and

tie a tea-pail on the outside of it, and each of us must take one tin cup. There's nothing like tea in the woods in a cold climate. It's better than coffee or any other kind of drink. Woodsmen use almost nothing else in all such countries the world over, I have been told. But of all the drinks that are brought into these woods, liquor is the worst. Nothing will play a man out so quick. When within twenty minutes or so of camp, when very much exhausted, or after camp is reached, when a fire must be built and it's very cold, it sometimes may do good; but even then one tin of hot tea is worth a gallon of it. This is one of the greatest and commonest mistakes city people make up here. Sometimes half the weight of their stuff will be in bottles of whiskey, or something of that kind. A person who spends winter after winter prowling about these woods, as I have done, where the snow gets five and six feet deep on a level, and the thermometer remains below zero for days, ought to know something about this kind of thing. When hardship has been endured and is over, liquor may at times be of some use, but while hardship is being endured it is clear poison.

"You had better leave your outer shirts here in camp, your undershirts will soon be wet through under the pack with perspiration, and you will want your outer shirts dry to put on when we get back. You must, however, take your coats, for though while travelling you will be warm enough, when you stop to rest and take off your packs you will be chilled through unless you have something warm to put on.

"You should take turns at the pack-basket, and the one that carries the knapsack must carry the rifle too. I have put about fifty pounds in my pack, and I must take my axe besides. Your packs will weigh about twenty-five pounds apiece.

"Now everything is ready. Let's back our loads and be off."

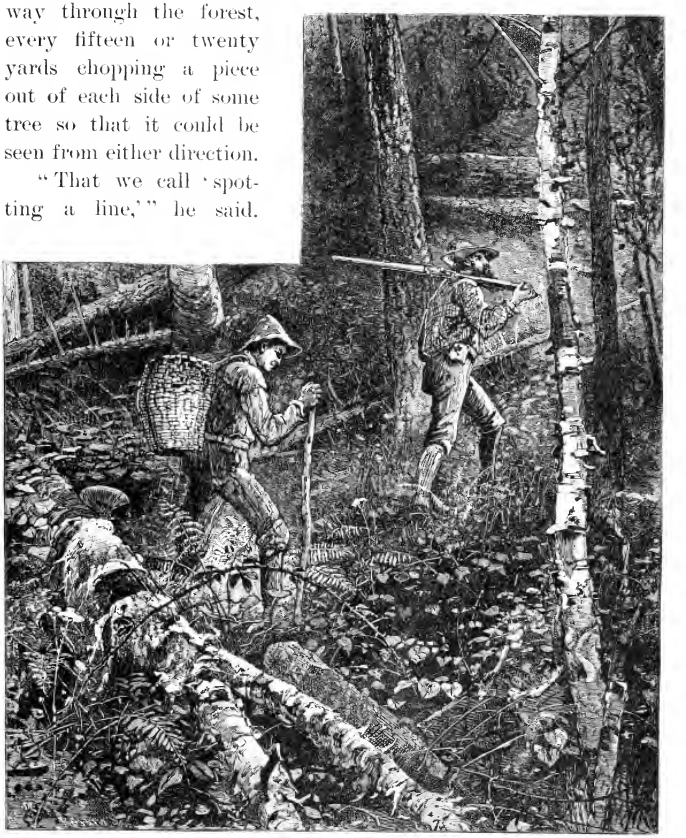
"Is the rifle loaded, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry, to whom it and the knapsack had fallen.

"No, and it don't need to be now. It's a repeating rifle. The magazine is full, and it won't take a second to put a cartridge in the barrel if we want to shoot. We have a rule never to carry a cartridge in the barrel of a rifle when in the woods, unless we are

alone, or unless the man who carries it leads the way. "Travelling through the woods is rough work, and every one gets more or less falls. So there is only one safe rule, and that is to keep your rifle-barrel empty as long as any one is ahead of you."

The trapper led the way through the forest, every fifteen or twenty yards chopping a piece out of each side of some tree so that it could be seen from either direction.

"That we call 'spotting a line,'" he said.



A FOREST HIGHWAY.

"Then, when we have set our traps, each of these spots serves as a guidepost when visiting them. You see, we are bound uphill. This is to be a sable-line, and we trap those animals on the hard wood ridges. You'll soon get more open travelling and fewer windfalls," he continued, as he saw that the boys were becoming red in the face and out of breath.

Every little while he would strike some large tree with the butt of his axe and pass on. The boys noticed it, but were too breathless to ask why. Suddenly he stopped after so striking a tree, and said, "Off packs; we'll take a rest."

He then fell to chopping at the tree about four or five feet from the ground. The boys watched him with admiration. He swung the keen axe as though it were a feather, every blow falling exactly in the cut left by its predecessor. At first this did not seem to produce much effect. Then a great chunk of wood sprang out from where the axe had been applied, disclosing a hollow in the trunk of the tree.

"Are you going to cut that tree down, Mr. Dant?" asked Dick.

"Oh no, I am making a place for a trap. If the trap is not housed in some way, the snow will soon cover it so that it will not spring. Besides, a baited trap must be set so that the animal can get at the trap by only one opening, and by going over the trap. You see, I cut the door high enough to be above the snow, and on the side opposite that from which the snow is likely to drift. Now we have cut enough. Let's fill the hole below the opening to form a floor, and put a trap in there."

This was soon done. The packs were resumed, and they moved on. The boys, now fully rested, were loaded with questions.

"I thought the sable was a Russian animal, Mr. Dant," said Harry.

"So it is. Our animal is the pine-marten, but it goes here by the name of sable."

"What does it look like?" continued Harry.

"It depends much on the season of the year. All wild animals at the approach of winter change their clothes, just as you do; and, like yours, their summer clothes are not only thinner, but often of a

A WEASEL AND ITS VICTIM.

different color from their winter dress. A full-grown sable is about the size of a three-quarter-grown cat, though its legs are shorter and its neck longer, like all of the weasel kind of animals. In the summer a sable looks very much as a gray cat would look if it had crawled through the pipe of a coal-stove. In the winter the best of them are very much like a red fox in color. Such a skin is worth about two dollars. I am told the greater part of them are sent to Armenia. They are a tree-climbing animal, and live on mice, squirrels, and small birds."

"Are they hard to trap?" asked Dick.

"No, not very, if you know how. But this seems a pretty likely place. Suppose we take another rest here."

The trapper sounded the trees near by, but none were found to be hollow.

"As we can't find a hollow tree, we'll have to build here."

Never had the boys so thoroughly realized how utterly unfit they were to live in the woods on their own resources as when they saw in what a surprisingly short time the trapper felled a soft-wood tree of some size, cut a piece off its butt, split it into boards, and made a little house with sides, back, and roof, at the foot of a large tree.

"You see your saw wouldn't be good for much at this work, Harry," said Dick.

"Yes, I see that," replied Harry. "But would it take too much time, Mr. Dant, to show us how you set the trap?"

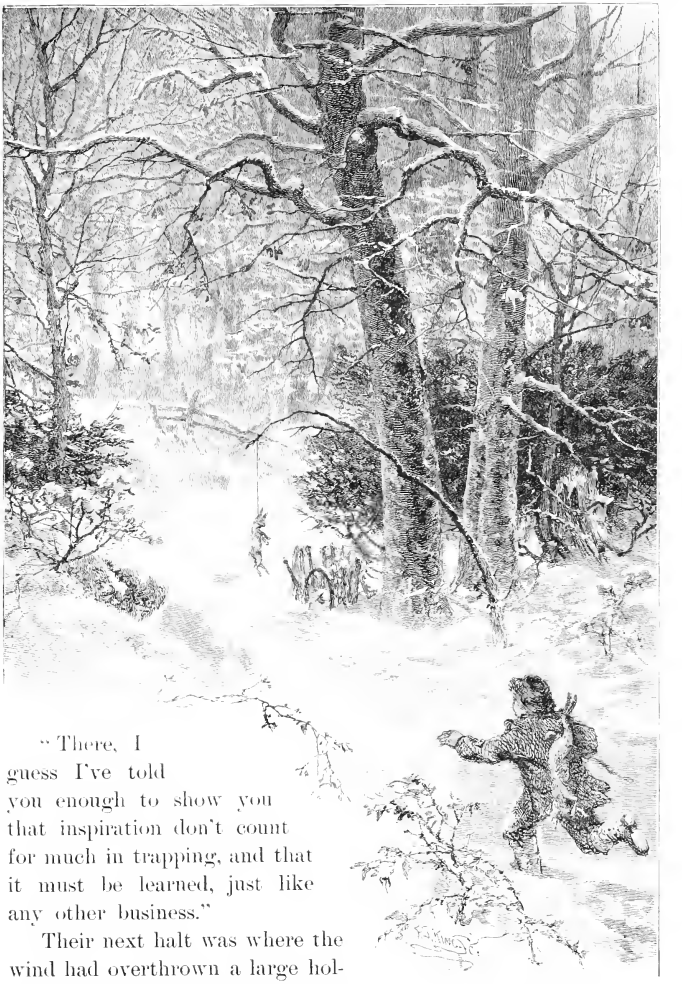
"Time or no time I'll show you any how. You see, I first cut this little pointed twig and stick it upright in the back part of the house. On this I skewer my bait. Any piece of fish or meat will do. You know I told you the sable was one of the few animals we trap with bait.

"The next thing is to mix the sweet and the bitter together, just like tea and sugar, so that the animal can't take one without getting the other. So by the little house we shut off all approach to the trap except from one direction—that is, through the door; and that we fortify to the best of our ability.

"Having placed the bait near the back side of the house, we

next set the trap thus, between the door and the bait, so that the animal can't reach the bait except over the trap. Next I go to some old log or stump and get a piece of rotten wood, which I crumble over the set trap until it is just buried out of sight. But the trencher of the trap, on which the animal must step to spring it, is quite small. We must make the animal put his foot on the trencher, or we might better have given him the bait and left the trap at home, since it would be less trouble and just about as profitable. So I cut two twigs, point their ends, bend them, and place one before and one behind the trap, so as to form arches too high for a sable to step over and too low for him to crawl under. This gives the trap four chances at him, one when he leaps the first arch, and one when he prepares to leap the second arch on his way in, and the same again on his way out. A sable that escapes must have an uncommon run of luck. Trapping is full of little tricks of that kind, and the trapper who does not know and practise them stands a mighty poor show.

"Another rule in trapping is that the trap must not be chained up solid, as you did your traps, or the animal is apt to leave only a foot for the trapper's share, and carry off its fur on three legs for its own. If a trap is chained up solid, then nothing must be within reach that the animal can get such hold of so that it can pull against the trap with all its strength. All small trees and bushes in reach must be cleared away, or the trap must be fastened to a yielding resistance, just as large fish are caught with a light but limber rod. With valuable animals the trap is generally fastened to a spring-pole, which snatches them up in the air and clear of the ground at the first jump they make when the trap nips them. If the animal is large, such as a bear or a lynx, the trap is fastened to one end of a loose log of wood, called a 'clog.' The animal exhausts his first vigor in turning double somersets over the clog and in fighting it. When sick of that amusement it walks off, towing the clog, and leaving a plain trail for the trapper to follow. The clog fouls something every few steps, and when at last it gets firmly lodged between some roots or in a windfall, the animal's strength is so exhausted that it can no longer break loose.



"There, I guess I've told you enough to show you that inspiration don't count for much in trapping, and that it must be learned, just like any other business."

Their next halt was where the wind had overthrown a large hollow tree, breaking off the trunk five

A SPRING-POLE.

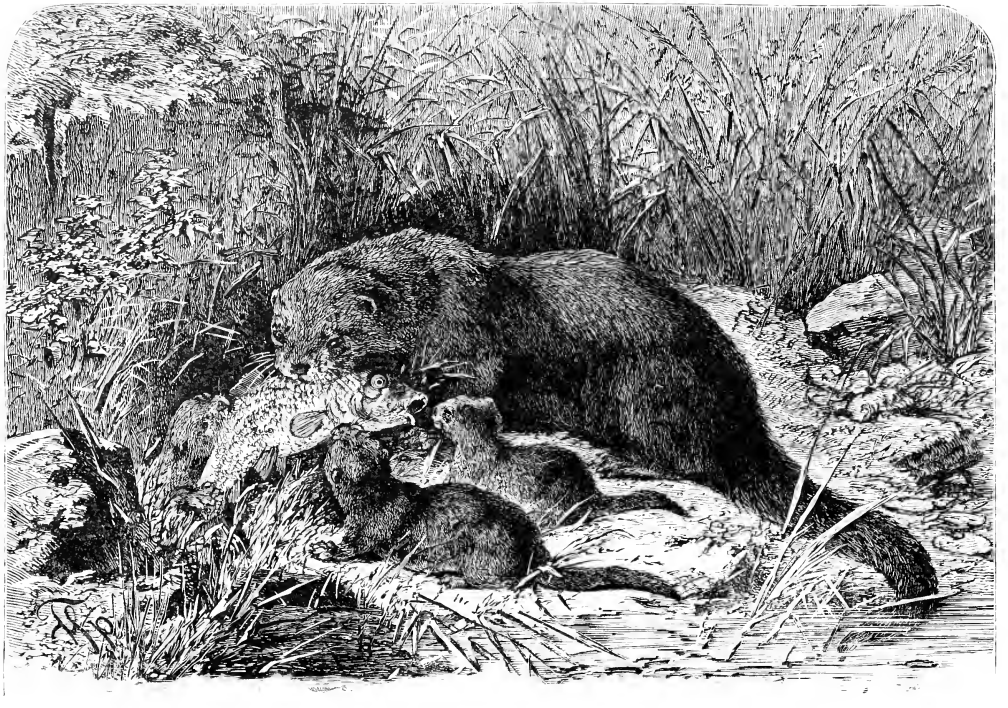
or six feet above the ground, and leaving it still hanging to the stump. In this hollow trunk a trap was left, and with hardly a pause they resumed their way.

About a quarter of a mile farther on the trapper again called a halt. "Take off your packs and put on your coats," he said. "This place ought to be a mighty good one for sable, and it ought to yield me a fisher or two during the season. It will take me quite a little time to fix up as I want to."

A MOUNTAIN BROOK.

As he spoke he attacked a fir-tree about a foot and a half in diameter with his axe, and soon brought it crashing down. He then split from one side of the stump, which projected about five feet above the ground, a board three feet long. He next proceeded to chop into the top of the stump in such a way as to form a box about a foot high—or rather three sides of a box, the bottom or floor, one side, and a back. He then nailed the board he had first split off in its original position, and the box was complete, all except the top or roof. A couple of pieces split from the prostrate trunk of the tree made that, and the house was complete.

"There," said the trapper, regarding his work with some satisfaction, "that's the way a sable-trap ought to be set. You have now seen all the ways we use for sable in this country. The hollow tree is very good, but you remember that we had to fill the hollow



AN OTTER AND HER YOUNG.

from the ground up to a level with the door of the house, to make a floor for the trap to lie on. But every sable that is trapped there will root out all the stuff we have put in, so that we will have to fill it again every time the trap is reset. The hollow-tree trunk is first-rate, but you can't find them very often where you want them. The cubby-house built of splits on the ground is the easiest way, but it is always being snowed up, so that in the end it catches less and gives more trouble than any of the others. This last takes more time in the beginning, but it pays altogether the best in the end, for once finished, it is done for good.

"I will now fix the trap as though for a fisher, as indeed every trap on a sable-line ought to be fixed, for they are great chaps to follow up a sable-line and steal the bait, and to eat up such sable as may have been already caught as well. But on a new line like this we seldom have time beforehand to do just what we would like to do. So, ordinarily we just drive the gump-wedge into the tree where the trap is placed, and let it go at that."

"The what?" asked Dick.

"The gump-wedge. You see that there is an iron ring and also an iron wedge on the loose end of the chains attached to these small-sized traps. We call that wedge a 'gump-wedge,' and by it, when we wish to do so, nail the chain fast to the tree. But now I propose to use the ring to fasten the chain and trap, for we are planning for a fisher as well as sable; and since it is a ten-dollar instead of a two-dollar prize, it requires a little more consideration."

The trapper then proceeded to cut down every bush and small tree within ten feet of where his trap was to be, except one tough bush. He next cut a pole about five feet long, split one end, put the ring at the end of the trap-chain over the split end of the pole, and drove a wedge into the split, thus making that end of the pole so large that the ring could no longer be pulled off. He then tied the other end of the pole to the bush.

"There's quite a lot of philosophy in that set," he said to the boys. "Along comes Mr. Fisher prowling about where he has no business, and gets nipped by the trap. Instantly the air is full of chains, traps, and fur, flying about like a pinwheel. When he gets

sick of that, he begins to pull and drag. But he is just like a trout on a fly-rod. The bush gives with, and recovers itself from, every strain he makes. He hasn't half a chance to put out his strength. He can't gnaw the pole off, because it's too thick for his kind of teeth. He hasn't a carpenter-shop in his mouth, like a beaver. At all events he can gnaw the bush off, or at least the string which ties the pole to the bush. Checkmated again; the pole is so much longer than the chain of the trap that he cannot reach the bush. There is but one thing for that fisher to do, and that is to practise resignation, for his day has come. Still, if I find a fisher is working on one of my lines, I generally rig a spring-pole, and attach the trap-chain to that. Then the first jump the fisher makes after the trap snaps him, releases the spring-pole and snatches Mr. Fisher up in the air, to dangle there until it dies or the trapper comes along and clubs it."

"How often do you visit your traps, Mr. Dant?"

"I try to look at them once a week. Trappers generally manage it this way up here. They start from the home-camp along one of their lines at daybreak Monday morning, and follow it till evening, when they camp. The next morning they are off again over a continuation of the line till evening, when they camp again—and so on. The line is like a very irregular loop, having its beginning and end at the home-camp, and long enough to take from daybreak on Monday until Saturday evening to go over it and attend to the traps."

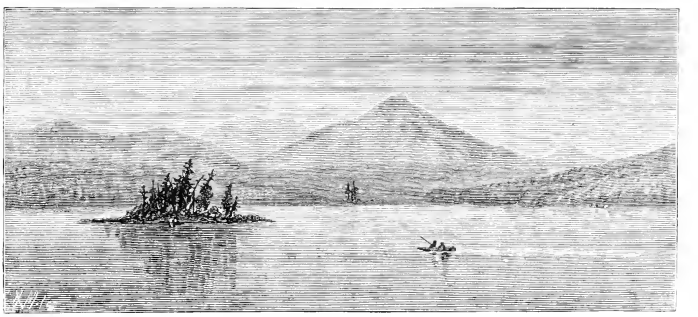
"Do you mean to say, Mr. Dant," asked Dick, "that if an animal gets into one of your traps say an hour after you have left it, that it has to stay there a week before you come back again to take it out?"

"That's about the size of it. It's awful tough medicine for the fur-bearing animals. I've often thought if the ladies who wear the furs we trap only knew the agonies the poor animals who grew them had suffered, there would soon be an end to our business. If the most of those we trap were not themselves such cruel, blood-thirsty creatures, I don't know as I could have much heart in trapping. Most of them only get what they give to every living thing they come across that they can master."

"What is a fisher, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry.

"A fisher is about the size of a full-grown cat, but with the long neck, short legs, and thin body of all the weasel family of animals. Most people call them black, though really the fur is nearly black at the root and gray at the tip. The older they are the grayer they become. I have seen some almost white on the head and shoulders. Sometimes they have a white patch or stripe under the chin, and sometimes not. It has a long, rather bushy tail. It's a mighty enterprising creature, and as full of fight as an egg is full of meat. When you walk up to one in a trap, to pay your respects with a club, it'll show more teeth and claws than would fit out a harrow; and you want to keep clear of them too, for it's no respecter of persons. It's a tree-climber, and lives on any bird or small animal it can catch. Some people call it the 'black cat.' Why it is called a fisher, beats me, for it never fishes, like the otter or mink, or eats fish, as far as I know. It's as valuable fur as we get up here. When I catch a fisher I catch a good ten-dollar bill at the same time. They are not very plenty—I mean the fisher are not, though perhaps I might, with equal truth, say the same of the ten-dollar bills to be made by trapping."

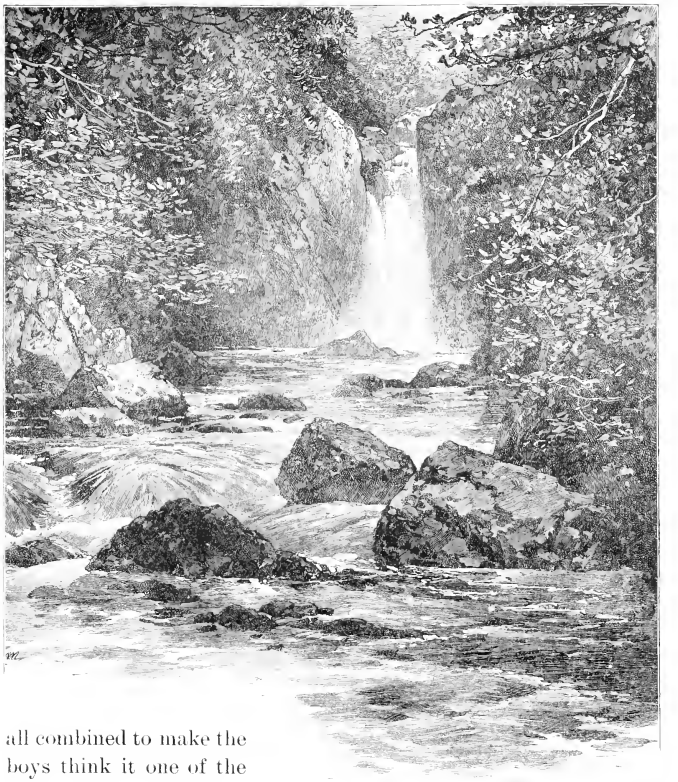
While this conversation was in progress the packs had been resumed, and soon afterwards the stream, which had been their first objective, was reached.



CHAPTER VI.

Lunch at the Little River.—Camp-fires in the Woods.—The Caribou.—Lost.—How a Woodsman finds his Way in the Forest.—A Deer-road and a Trail.

A TURBULENT mountain stream, from eighty to one hundred feet wide, overshadowed with lofty spruce-trees, now lay before them. One gigantic pine, the growth of centuries, towered far above the surrounding forest, supporting in its blasted top an enormous fish-hawk's nest. Another pine, equal in size and age, overthrown by some recent storm, lay across the stream, bridging it from side to side. In every direction the woods were comparatively free from underbrush, permitting an unusual extent of view. The music of the running water, the murmur of the wind through the tree-tops, the pure and bracing air, their perfect health and vigor and relief from the cruel anxiety of the last two days,



A TURBULENT MOUNTAIN STREAM.

all combined to make the boys think it one of the most beautiful spots they had ever seen. Nor were they far wrong.

Upon the bank of the stream the trapper paused, threw off his pack, and said,

"We may as well lunch here, boys, as our work is now about half done."

With a vivid recollection of their own efforts to prepare a meal

in the open air, even with the help of a stove, the boys watched the trapper, half expecting to see him experience at least some of the difficulties they had met.

But not so. He pulled a sheet of bark from a neighboring white birch tree, gathered some pine bark from a rotting old stump, and had a fire in less than three minutes. He then cut a green pole about ten feet long, thrust its butt under a root so that the smaller end projected over the fire, and hung on it his tea-pail, filled with water. Then he cut some long green sticks and skewered his meat on them. The pine bark had burned to red-hot coals by the time the water was boiling. He then removed the pail, put in his tea to steep, and giving each of the boys a stick furnished with a piece of meat, showed them how to broil it. In less than twenty minutes after they had halted they were eating.

"Why, Mr. Dant, did you build your fire out here on the stones, instead of in the woods, where fuel and poles were so much handier?" asked Dick.

"Have you ever seen a forest on fire, or a forest before and after it has been burned over? If you had you would hardly ask me. A broken leg would not be as great a misfortune to me as to have a fire run through these woods. The game would be driven away for many years, and all the fur-bearing animals, except those living in the water, would be destroyed. Nothing can be more lovely than this forest seems to me. Every day and at every step I notice something new and beautiful. It is my home. A fire would change it into a desert. Every tree would be blasted, and instead of the grand forest we now see, a forest of naked trunks like telegraph-poles would take its place. Even the very ground would be burned away, until nothing but rocks, gravel, and ashes would be left. The surface earth in the woods is nothing but old wood and leaves, and it will smoulder and burn like peat. So we never build a fire on it, if we can help it, unless the ground is quite wet. If we have to, we drench the fire and surrounding ground well with water before we leave."

"I begin to think you have a reason for almost everything you do," said Harry. "Perhaps there was a reason why you took all

ESCAPING FROM A FOREST FIRE.

the trouble to get that pine bark for the fire instead of the dry wood almost under your hand."

"Oh yes, there was a reason for that. Pine bark blazes for a little while only, and then turns to hot coals free from smoke. It gives a quicker and hotter fire than wood, and a much better one to cook meat over. I don't know that I ever thought of it before, but this life of mine up here seems to be a very free and independent life. I seem to be absolutely my own master. In the cities they have laws, and a policeman on almost every corner to make people obey them. No law of man reaches up here in the wilderness. In the city a man has a thousand and one engagements and obligations which force him to do certain things day after day whether he likes it or not. I can go north, south, east or west, at any time, night or day, that I please. But really, come to think of it, I don't see that I am so much more free after all. In the settlements a man may break the law and not be found out, or if found out he may not be caught. But up here there are laws in force from which there is no escape or concealment, obedience to which is the price of life itself. I mean the laws of nature. Up here, dependent entirely on myself, if I wilfully or ignorantly violate these laws, I cannot shelter myself behind some other person who has obeyed them. If I omit to do the right thing at the right time, or do the wrong thing at any time, my own skin must pay for it. You are not far out in saying I have a reason for almost everything I do; and the reason is, that I have learned by experience what I must do. Life in the woods requires its knowledge and skill just as it requires knowledge and skill to live in the settlements and make steam-engines. The principal difference is that in the one case ignorance would run a man in debt and make him fail in business, while in the other it might cost him his life."

Suddenly the trapper paused, listened for a moment, and then whispered, "Grab the rifle and hide behind these bushes. Be quick, but be quiet about it. I hear a caribou coming."

The boys did as they were told, though they could not see or hear an indication that there was an animal within forty miles of

them. Soon they heard a branch snap, and then another. Then there was a pause.

"There, don't you see him?" whispered the trapper.

"No," replied Harry, who had the rifle; "where?"

"Right by that spruce near the little white birch. You've got to shoot quick. He sees the fire and won't stand long."

In vain Harry strained his eyes. Just as he was about to pass the rifle to the trapper and beg him to fire, the animal gave a bound and vanished. For some moments the astonished boys could hear it crashing through the woods. Then the sound died away, and their astonishment gave place to a keen sense of mortification.

"Couldn't you see him?" asked the trapper. "He was in plain sight."

"Yes," said Harry, "I saw him well enough all the time; but I thought it was a stump till it moved. It didn't look like a deer at all."

"You mean it didn't look like the deer in the picture-books, I suppose. Animals in the woods never do. All you ever see is a patch of color differing very little from surrounding objects; that is, unless the animal is in motion. There, you need not feel so bad about it. Nine people out of ten make the same mistake at first. We have plenty of meat. Still, I should have liked you to have that head to take home. It was a nice one."

Seeing that his reassurance did little to soften the disappointment, the trapper changed the subject with that kindly tact which was one of his most marked characteristics.

"By-the-way, boys, you don't know you are lost, do you? In what direction does camp lie?"

"So long as we have found you, we can't be lost very much," replied Dick. Then he thought for a few moments, and pointed towards where he thought the camp was.

"What?" exclaimed Harry. "That isn't the way. It lies right over there in line with that big pine-tree;" and quite a warm dispute arose between them. Each cast an eye from time to time at the trapper, hoping to gain some hint as to who was right from

A BURNT FOREST.

his face. But he did nothing but listen, smoke, and laugh. At last they appealed to him to decide between them.

"You will be woodsmen one of these days, boys, if you keep at it, but you still have something to learn. You, Harry, would have taken a bee-line for the settlement. You, Dick, would have gone over the boundary into Canada. The camp lies in neither place, but over there, just about half-way between."

The boys were more than astonished to find themselves so far out. At last Dick said, "We came in such a crooked way that I suppose I must have got turned round somehow."

"You always have to go in a crooked way through these woods," answered the trapper, "for the longest way round is almost always the shortest way home. Hills, swamps, and ponds prevent anything that can't swim, walk, and fly from following a straight course up here. There are lots of places where the wind has raked through the trees, and piled them together like jackstraws, where you couldn't, if loaded, make a hundred feet in a hundred minutes, to say nothing of the danger of a broken arm or leg. Such places must be gone round."

"Then a compass isn't of much use?" said Harry.

"Not unless you know how to use it, and that's quite a different thing from using it on the water. There a straight line is taken and followed. Here you go wandering about, seldom in the same course for any five consecutive minutes, but the average of all the directions taken must be the same straight line which would have been followed on water."

"I suppose you know the woods so well that you can always tell where you are?" said Harry.

"Not by a jugful," replied the trapper, "nor any other man, either. There are peculiar-looking places in the woods which, of course, I recognize, but as a general thing the woods in one place look very much like the same kind of woods in another, just as one place on the ocean looks like another. When I have plenty of time and am not hurried, I always choose a new course to any place I'm bound to, so as to study the country and keep track of where the game is working. If I didn't I wouldn't know where to trap and

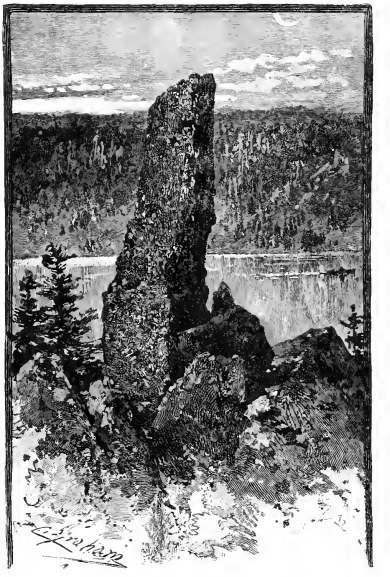
"WHERE THE WIND HAS RAKED THROUGH THE TREES"

hunt to the best advantage. It's just as much part of my business as to know how to set my traps. Often and often I couldn't say just where I was, but I always know where the place I'm bound to is, and how to get there."

"How do you do it?" asked Dick.

"The two things which a woodsman relies on most to show him his way are the direction in which the streams flow and the sun. Suppose I was a stranger in this neighborhood, and was in the woods anywhere within ten or twelve miles of here. I had heard

of the Forks and wanted to go there. The first brook I struck would show me where the main valley and the river lay, since the brook is bound sooner or later to flow into the river. But the brook will be crooked, and will probably flow through alder swamps and beaver-works, where travelling would be mighty mean. I would then hunt for the tallest spruce-tree I could find which had a smaller tree growing near it. That don't take long in these woods. I would climb the small tree, and from that climb into the big one and go to its very top. From there I would get an outlook. All the forest through this wilderness is pretty much like what you have seen. Sometimes it's a little thicker and sometimes thinner, but as a general thing you can't see more than about thirty or forty yards in any direction. If you want to see out over the country, you've got to climb for it. Having decided where to go, I'd take the compass direction, and notice how the sun strikes me when looking that way. That is, if the sun shines on my left side, I know that if I keep it shining on my left side I am on my course. As I travel I have to wander a good deal from this line for the sake of easier walking, but I keep track of the sun all the time, and know when I leave my course and in what direction. The first chance I have, I work back, cross my course, and go off about as much on the other side, so as to average it up and keep my general direction as



A PECULIAR-LOOKING PLACE.

near right as I conveniently can. At the end of half an hour I know about what I have done and whether I am on the line; or if off from it, how much I am off and on which side. I then take a new compass bearing, see how the sun strikes me when facing in that direction, and go ahead. I want you to remember this, because every time we are out of sight of camp, and I think of it, I am going to ask you where it lies. Notice the position of the sun when you start, and keep watch of it. You will then know every change of direction we make, and what the average direction is. But you mustn't forget that between sunrise and sunset the sun travels from east to west, and to make some allowance for its motion. It's a dreadful thing to be lost in these woods, and I don't mean to give you the chance. But if we do get separated, I intend you shall be able to find your way back to camp if anything I can say will teach you how to do it."

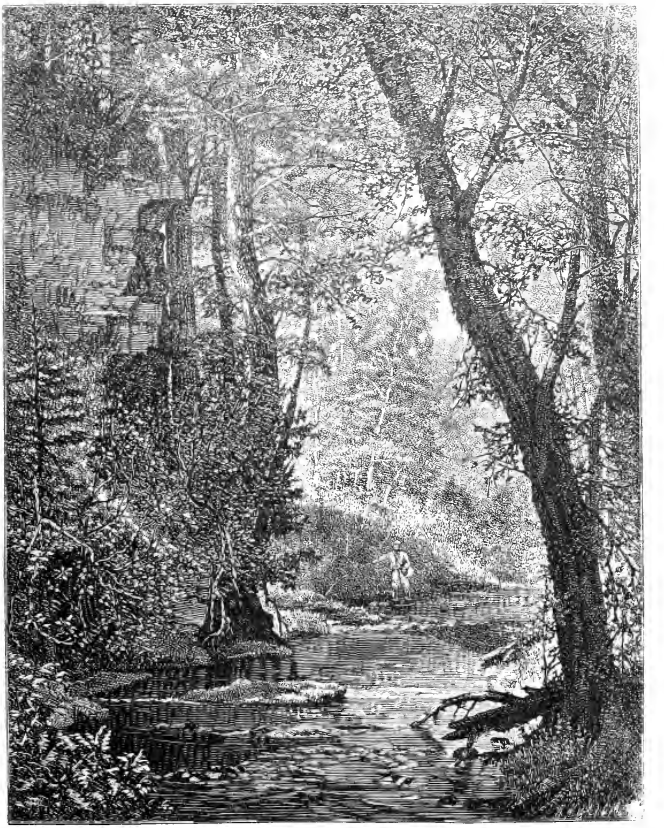
ON THE LITTLE RIVER.

"But suppose it's cloudy and the sun can't be seen—then what?" asked Dick.

"Then it's harder. If the direction of the hills and valleys is known they may serve as a guide. If not, then get the compass bearing of the right course, which, we will say, is north-east. Then pick out the most distant object that can be seen to the north-east, pocket the compass, and go to that object. You can wander to and fro as much as you like, but the object you are aiming for must be

kept in sight. Having reached the mark, out compass and pick out a new mark to the north-east, go to that, then use the compass again in the same way, and so on."

"Can't you tell where the north and south are by the moss on the trees? I have certainly read so," said Dick.



ALONG THE BANK OF THE STREAM.

"There are lots of things that look all right in a book which are not good for much out of it, and I am inclined to think that's one. The idea is that the moss grows thickest on the most sheltered side of the tree, and that may be so. But the other notion that the sheltered side must be the south side, and the bare side the north side, certainly isn't true in these woods; and I don't think it's so in hilly countries, if anywhere. It doesn't agree with the facts here, at any rate, and it does not seem to me reasonable either. The cold winds may blow from the north over the tops of the hills, but through the valleys the same wind will draw from many different directions according to the shape of the hills, and the exposed side of the trees will vary accordingly. But we must be moving."

Resuming their packs, they continued their way up along the bank of the stream for about two miles, leaving a trap here and there on some conspicuous tree.

There the trapper halted and said, "The line to camp begins at this tree. It is a spotted line, just like that I made this morning from camp to the stream, only the spots are three years old and not so plain. It's my turn to play gentleman now and bring up the rear. Dick, you take the lead for a while, and let's see how you make out."

Dick did as he was told, and for quite half an hour they pursued their way in silence, except when they stopped for a moment or two to make some trifling repair to a sable-trap. They found the line arranged like that made in the morning, the traps averaging about a quarter of a mile apart and housed in the same way. The travelling had not been very good, and at times it was not without difficulty and an occasional suggestion from the trapper that Dick kept the line. Then they struck a well-worn trail, and Dick went off on it with a sigh of relief and satisfaction. They had followed it for some forty yards or so when the trapper said,

"You've changed your mind, I suppose, Dick, and intend to lie out instead of going back to camp."

"No, I haven't," answered Dick; "I'm right on the trail. It's just as plain as plain can be."

"But I don't see any spotted trees on this trail; and, as I told

you, the sable-line is spotted clear to camp. Take a look at the sun. Are you going in the same direction in which you started, or in anything like it?"

Dick was forced to admit he was not.

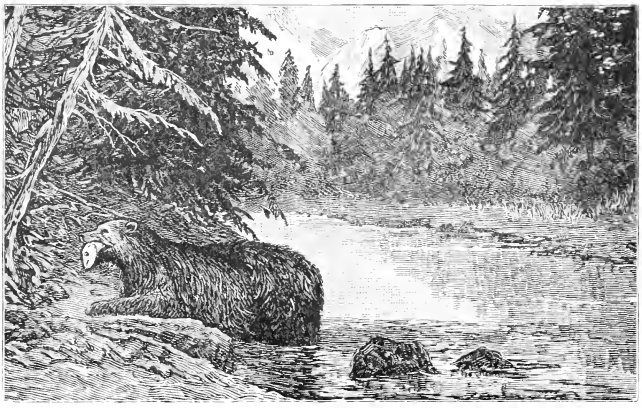
"I put you in the lead on purpose to teach you a lesson. You are off the line, and not on any trail; that is, any trail that was made by man. This is a deer-road. If you followed it, it would

AN OBSTACLE TO TRAVEL.

lead you up into the mountains, grow gradually fainter and fainter, and finally disappear altogether. Many and many a poor fellow lost in the woods has followed such trails to his death. The deer spend the day up in the hills. In the evening they wander down towards the water to feed, and this is one of the paths they follow. There are thousands of them up here, and you want to study it carefully so you will know one the next time you see it.

Now we will get back on the line, and then, Harry, you may take the lead."

Harry took due note of the sun and kept a keen lookout for the spots on the trees, so all went well for a long time. At last



A LONE FISHERMAN.

they came to another path. Harry crossed it and kept on a short distance, then stopped and looked anxiously round. He could see no spotted tree.

"Hello, Harry, what's this?" called out the trapper from the rear.

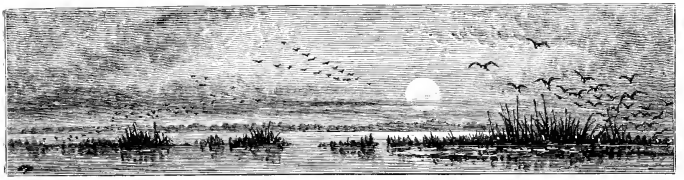
"You don't fool me on any deer-road. I've learned that much, anyway," replied Harry. "I know I've lost the line, but I'll find it again in a few minutes."

"Well, I'm glad of that," answered the trapper. "But as this deer-road leads direct to camp, and is the same one which you came over from the Forks, perhaps you had better look for the line here."

Harry was not a little mortified at his mistake, but he bore it with the best grace he could.

"Now that you have seen a deer-road and a trail, I may as well show you how to tell them apart," said the trapper. "A man's foot is long and broad, while a deer's foot is small and narrow. Both walk in the way that's easiest for them. A man, therefore, steps on all the high points; a deer steps between them. So when you see the moss knocked off the higher points and the projecting roots bare, you may know that it is done by some long-footed animal such as a man or bear, and bear are very scarce up here, though plenty enough down around the settlement, where they can find more food. So if you see that the wear of travel is all in the hollows between the roots, and that they and the high points in the trail are covered with moss or dirt, you may conclude it's a deer-road. There, that old tree trunk which has fallen across the trail tells the story. You have crossed fifty or more just like it to-day, and found the upper side of every one of them covered with moss. When a man straddles over such a log he invariably tears the moss off. A deer does not. Such a mark will last a long time."

Soon afterwards they reached the home-camp, quite tired from their day's tramp and with a ravenous appetite.



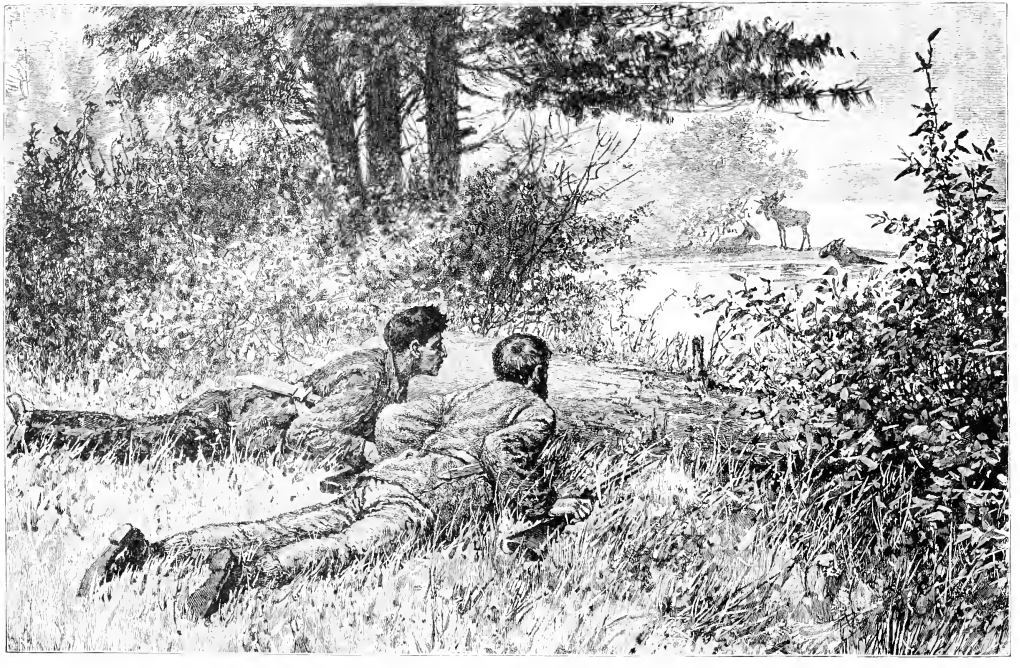
CHAPTER VII.

Back at Dant's Camp.—Moose-talk.—A Hunting Adventure.—Attacked by a Moose.

AFTER supper that evening, the trapper sat on the flat board which ran along the foot of the wide bunk, which he called "the deacon's seat." He sat bent forward, his elbows resting on his knees, slowly puffing his pipe, and thoughtfully gazing into the fire, as though he could read the future in its dancing flames. At last he spoke:

"Didn't one of you say something to me about a chance at a moose? Yes? I thought so. I've been thinking it over a little. I don't see much more to be done around here until the trapping season opens, so I have four or five spare days that I can give to it, if you like. What do you say?"

Since the first night in Dant's camp, had any good fairy given the boys the traditional three wishes, this which the trapper had suggested would have been the first. He had detected it with his usual shrewdness, and though at the cost of not a little inconvenience and some loss of time, had determined to gratify their ambi-



STILL-HUNTING MOOSE.

tion if he could. So eager were the boys that they were quite incoherent in their thanks.

"You'd better hold your horses before you go much further into the thanking business. Perhaps we won't get anything after all, except lots of hard work. That we may safely count on. This is a betwixt and between season for moose-hunting, but still there is a chance, and we'll take it. These woods are too thick and too noisy to still hunt them in, until there is a good cushion of snow over the ground to cover the leaves and twigs."

"What do you mean by 'still hunt them?'" asked Dick.

"To find a fresh trail and follow it up for a shot. But you couldn't stand that sort of thing, anyway. Why not? Because a moose has the sharpest hearing and the keenest scent of any animal. Though its nose may look like a battered foot-ball, and its ears like the sails of a windmill, they answer the purpose for which noses and ears were made uncommon well. Many's the time they have been good enough or bad enough, according as you look at it from the moose or my side of the question, to make me almost ready to tear out my hair with disappointment, till I was as bald as a coot. I have followed a moose for every minute of daylight for three or four days on end, camping just where night overtook me, and off again as soon as it was light enough to see; and when I thought I had a dead-sure thing at last, a step on some little dry twig, or a rasp of my clothes against some bush, or a sudden shift of wind, has started the animal off like a runaway engine. Like most animals, they are not very sharp-sighted. But if a man wants to get the best of a moose's nose and ears still hunting, he's got to lay awake nights thinking how he is going to do it, and get up early in the morning to carry out his plans, and then he'll fail oftener than not. But I had rather kill one moose still hunting than ten any other way, because it's a trick none but a good woodsman can do. But that's neither here nor there. You couldn't stand the hardship, and you'd be sure to make some kind of a noise just at the wrong time; and we haven't any snow. So that way is out of the question."

"I have heard my uncle tell about still hunting elk out West," said Harry.

"Yes," replied the trapper. "But still hunting out there and here are two very different things. There the country is comparatively open, you can see your game a long way off, and there's a chance for long shots. Here, in the places where a moose would lay up for the day, it's generally almost as thick as the hair on a cat's back, you can't see your game until you are nearly on top of it, and you seldom shoot over thirty or forty yards. Then out there you can carry your grub, blankets, and even a tent, on mule-back. Here you've got to be your own mule, and can't carry an ounce of anything that isn't absolutely necessary to keep the breath of life in your body. But there's no use of talking about it. Still hunting is out of the question for us."

"But isn't there some other way?" asked Harry, in dismay.

"Yes, there are several other ways. But they are all uncertain, since we must depend on the moose coming to us, or at least meeting us half-way, instead of going to it. We can patrol the water at night on the chance of catching one crossing, or I might call one up. But it's settled that we try it, is it? All right. Then we light out of here for Canada just as soon after daylight to-morrow as we can swallow our breakfast."

"That will be grand," said Dick. "I've never been out of the United States, and I should like to see Canada first-rate."

"Canada is quite a little tract of country," replied the trapper, with a smile, "and I hardly think you'll be able to take it all in in this trip."

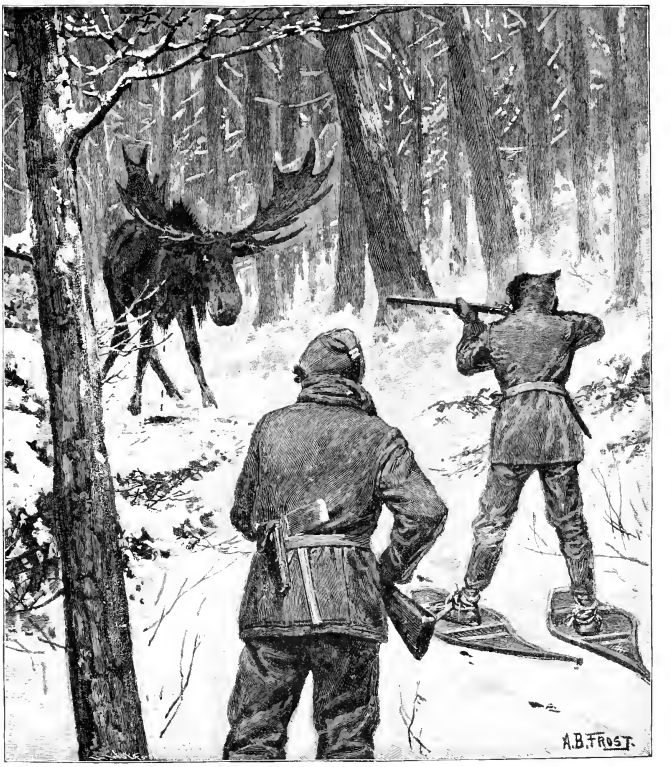
"I didn't exactly mean that," answered Dick. "I meant I would like to say I had been in Canada. But why do we go over there? Are moose much more plenty?"

"No, I don't think there is much to choose in that respect. There are plenty of moose around here. But I have a camp and a good canoe at a certain place in Canada where we can be comfortable. The country over there is more open than here, so I think our chances will be a good deal better. Besides, it's a month and more since anybody has been there, so the game has not been disturbed and won't be so suspicious."

"Tell us something about moose, Mr. Dant," said Harry.

HEAD OF BULL MOOSE.

"A moose is a long-legged, short-bodied animal, with a short thick neck and a little stub of a tail. I have heard of them as high as eight feet at the fore-shoulder, but I rather guess those moose grew after they were killed. You know, I suppose, that fish and game often do. If we say that seven feet, or seven feet one or two inches, is as tall as they ever grow, I think we will do the moose full



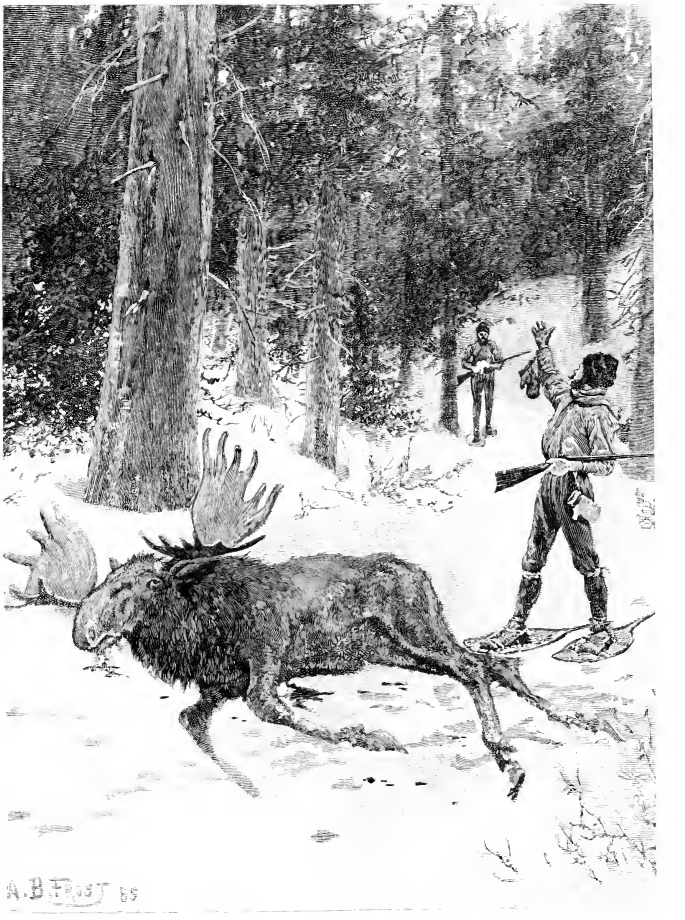
MOOSE AT BAY.

justice. On the end of its neck it has a head, not as big as all outdoors, it is true, but still a mighty big head all the same, and on that head are mounted a nose and a pair of ears that look as though they had been made for a head twice as big. There's nothing small about a moose except its eyes and its tail. I suppose that it takes so much nourishment to make and keep up such a nose and pair of ears they have to economize on eyes and tail.

"A moose has just two objects in life—to keep its hide whole and its stomach full. They spend their days upon the side of some mountain, each bull by himself, and each cow by herself, with only a calf or two of different ages, if she has any, for company. There it lies till towards sundown, snoozing and chewing the cud like a cow. But it don't make any difference how much the rest of the animal may doze, its nose and ears are always the widest kind of awake. Not the faintest sound nor the least taint in the air escapes notice. And they seem to have such judgment about sounds, too. Last November a year ago, I was sneaking up on a moose, when a tree fell in the woods close by. It made me pretty near jump out of my skin, but the moose just lazily turned its head and stared in that direction for a few minutes as unconcerned as you please. But if, instead of that, I had snapped one single twig as big as a lead-pencil, that moose would have dusted out of there as if the ground had suddenly grown red-hot under its feet.

"If it hears anything it thinks suspicious, and it's not too near, it will steal away so quietly that you can't hear the faintest sound. In the darkest night not a leaf will rustle nor a twig snap. A person might think it was the ghost of a moose if he didn't hunt up the tracks the next day, for even a ghost could not vanish more silently. But if it scents danger, particularly if the scent is of man, you'd think the whole country was being broken up. If you ploughed a locomotive through these woods it would hardly make more noise.

"I was off with a gentleman last October, over at a piece of water we will pass to-morrow. It's an uncommon good valley for game through which that stream flows, but a mighty poor one for the hunter. The brook, for really it isn't anything else, wouldn't



OUR MEAT.

be boatable at all if it were not for a lot of beaver dams, and that the valley there is level and boggy. The stream is narrow in all places; often it is not wide enough to turn the canoe round. The banks, too, are high, and covered in many places with tall grass so you can't look over. The woods in some places come to the bank, but oftener lie fifty or sixty feet back. The canoe I had over there was one of the kind you have to part your hair in the middle in. Any attempt to stand up in it to shoot over the bank would have stood us both on our heads in the drink in a little less than no time. So you see our only chance was to catch our game in the water, or in one of the very few places where the bank was low.

"Desperate hard luck we had that night. A beautiful full moon made things pretty light except where the shadow of the woods fell on the water. Well, we paddled up the stream till we were almost at the end of the boating. Then I heard a deer walking in the grass. You can easy tell a deer's walk from that of a caribou or moose, it's so much quicker and nervous-like. If we couldn't see the deer over the bank, it couldn't see us either, so I shoved the canoe into the shadow of some alder bushes on the side the deer was coming from, hoping it would take the water below us and give us a chance. There we waited for about five minutes, listening and watching for all we were worth. Then I heard a bird twitter in the bushes over our heads, and the next minute a deer snorted right in my sportsman's ear. It couldn't have been more than four feet off. Did you ever hear a deer snort? It sounds like a person coughing very loud. How it did snort and stamp! If ever a deer was scared out of a year's growth, that was the deer. And as to my man, it came on him so sudden and unexpected, and so near, and in the middle of such a deathly stillness, that it was as if some one had hit him with a club. If I hadn't had my paddle on the bank to hold the canoe still, we would have had to fin it sure.

"Well, of course that deer had no more business in that neighborhood, and cleared out as if it had to call on some one in the next county and had just five minutes left to get there. So we went down almost to the foot of the boating. There we heard two

caribou. We laid up to the bank and waited on those beasts full three-quarters of an hour, keeping all that time just as still as a cast-iron image. Sometimes they would come within twenty-five feet or so of us, and we'd think we were going to have them sure. Then they would wander off again, and we'd think it was all up. Then they'd come back again, and so it went on. Exasperating is no name for it. The woods just full of game, and we only wanted one head and couldn't get it. But then that's the way it generally works in actual practice. A hunter up here has to stand a lot of that sort of thing.

"Finally they went off without discovering us, or we getting a chance at them. Then we went up-stream again, almost as far as before. There I heard a moose—a big one. I could hear his slow, solemn tread, and the swish of the long grass on his legs as he walked along. There was a nice low place in the bank a little ahead of us, a splendid place for a moose to cross the stream, and just the spot for it to kick its last in. I put the canoe up against the bank and under some alder bushes, so that we would be hidden until the moose was in the water, and waited. My only thought was, 'Now, if my man is only good for anything, won't we give that moose a surprise party!' But it kept on by the crossing. You could count every footstep till it was right abreast of us on the other side of the bushes, not fifteen feet off. There it stopped. We waited, listening till our ears almost cracked, for full half an hour and never heard another sound. I knew then that the moose had gone, and whispered as much to my man. I whispered because I knew the moose was not frightened, only suspicious. It's their way if they suspect danger, and think they haven't been seen, to try to sneak off; and mighty well they do it too. A moose has a big head, but it has brains to match. If we did nothing more to scare it, there was a chance that it might try to cross farther down; and in hunting you've got to take all the chances there are lying around loose. You may do your level best forty times running, and nothing come of it; but if you let up on any one point, experience has taught me that that's just the time when that point will beat you sure. The first thing to be learned in hunting is patience,

and the next is perseverance. A poor shot who tries his best, and keeps trying, will get a good deal more game than a good one who is careless or gets discouraged.

"Well, as I was saying, I whispered to my man the moose had gone. He wouldn't believe it, but insisted on landing up at the

FOLLOWING AN ELK TRAIL.

low place so he could see behind the bushes. I told him it would spoil our chances below and do no good, but he insisted. Of course the man who pays the bills has a right to be boss, so we landed. There was nothing there. You wouldn't have thought a mouse, much less an animal as heavy as an ox, could have gone off through

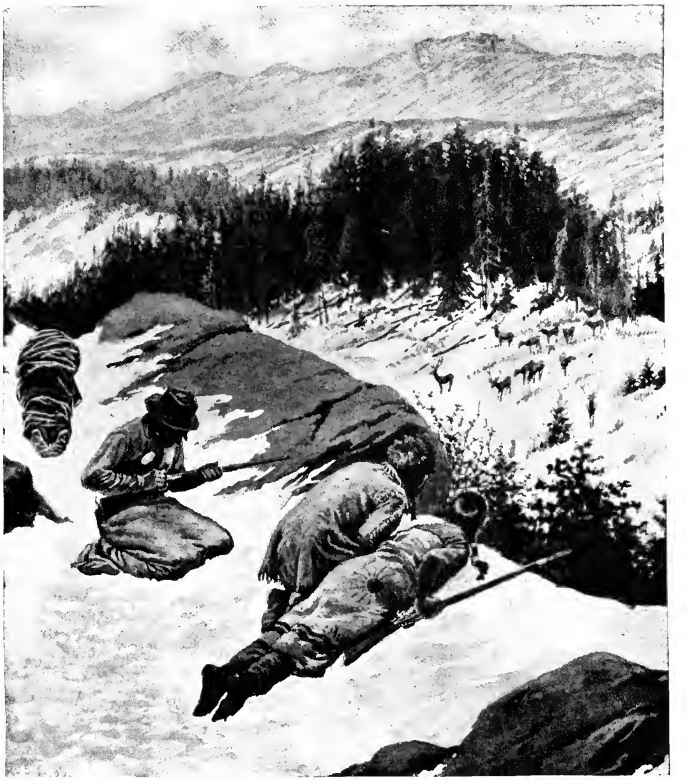
that high half-dry grass without our hearing it, especially on such a dead-still night as that was. At first my man was completely dumfounded. Then he insisted that we had fooled ourselves and that there never had been any moose there at all. But the next morning I took him up to the place and showed him the trail as plain as could be. It was a big one. He didn't say very much to me, but kept repeating to himself, 'I wouldn't have believed it! I wouldn't have believed it!'"

"Isn't a bull-moose a very dangerous animal to hunt?" asked Dick.

"No, not as a general thing," replied the trapper. "At this season of the year, which, you know, is the pairing season, they are sometimes inclined to be vicious. But now, as at any other time, they'll generally run if they can, even when wounded. I know that doesn't exactly agree with the books that I've seen. From them you'd think a wounded bull-moose was next door to a raging lion, but that isn't my experience. If they think they are cornered they'll fight every time; and so will any wild animal, if it isn't bigger than your thumb. They will always turn on a man who is running them on snow-shoes, but only if he crowds them too close, and not if he keeps thirty or forty yards off. I've killed a good many moose in my day, and have seen a good many killed, and I never saw but one case where a moose attacked when it seemed to have a good chance to run away, though I have heard of others."

"I'm glad of that," said Harry. "It would be bad enough to be gored by a bull, but to be gored by a bull-moose with so many points on its horns, why, it would punch a person full of holes all over."

"There isn't the least danger from its horns," remarked the trapper. "They don't attack a man that way. It's their fore-feet that are to be dreaded, for they can strike a blow with them like a sledge-hammer and as quick as a prize-fighter. They are so long-legged, too, that they have a big reach, and their hoofs cut like a knife. Then if they once get a man down, you'd think they had been groaning for that chance for the last five years. They will



AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

pound him till they are tired, stand off a while to get breath, and then at him again, and so on. When his friends come to carry him home they will find a shovel mighty convenient to have around."

"Tell us about when the moose did attack," said Dick.

"I was off with a gentleman where we are going to-morrow, it

must have been five years ago. He was a rather small thin man, one of the queerest mixtures I ever saw. One day there would be no bounds to his enterprise; the next you'd suppose that his bodily comfort was the only thing he ever thought of, and that he wouldn't wet the sole of his shoe for the whole township. Still he was a mighty pleasant man to be with, and an uncommon good shot with a rifle; and it was well for him he was, too. He had a 44-calibre Winchester repeating rifle, the same one we carried yesterday. He gave it to me afterwards. Well, we were over there in Canada prowling about the stream for a moonlight shot, for the moon was full then. As we rounded a bend, keeping in the shade of the bank, there stood a bull-moose on the other side of the stream just getting ready to cross. It's a good plan with game that may be dangerous to wait until it's abreast of or by you before you fire. You not only get a better shot, but the animal isn't so likely to turn on you. But this my man either didn't know or didn't care for. He drew on that moose quicker than scat, banged away, and just grazed the top of its neck. There's nothing like a neck shot if it's placed right. It will knock the biggest animal off its legs as though it were struck by lightning. There won't be the least kick left in it. But shooting by moonlight is at best an uncertain business, and he ought not to have tried a shot requiring such accuracy. I shall never forget the look of that moose as it came for us. It seemed to be about as big as a sleeping-car, and there was a green glare in its eyes that was enough to paralyze you. It was plain that it meant business and that there was no time for any foolishness. I sung out to my man to get out of the boat, thinking we'd leave the moose to hammer away at the boat, which would be the biggest object, and probably take up its attention while we took to the bank. Then, while it was interested in the boat we could bombard it at close quarters; and as my man knew where to shoot and could shoot, I made no doubt he'd floor it all right. Besides, I thought it likely the moose would stave its fore-legs through the boat the first or second lick, and if it did it wouldn't find it so easy to get clear again.

"Well, I got out in short order. The water wasn't over three

or three and a half feet deep. I supposed he would follow. But perhaps he didn't know that he could wade, or thought the water looked too wet. At any rate, there he sat, to my horror, cool as you please, pumping the lead into that moose, which was just jumping for him and making the water fly. I thought his time had

A LONG SHOT.

come sure, for I had nothing but the paddle and couldn't help him a bit. It was all over in eight or ten seconds, but I don't want to see any more such seconds. There wasn't time for many shots, for the moose wasn't more than thirty yards away at the start. But the second shot he fired caught the moose just where the neck joins the body, and brought it down within twenty feet of him. He

seemed cool enough after the danger was over—perhaps he didn't know what a narrow squeak he had had; but as for me, I was in such a tremble that I wanted to catch hold of a tree for fear I'd shake my teeth loose.

"By-the-way, do you know what time it is? because if you don't I'll tell you. It's time people who are bound for foreign parts went to bed."

CHAPTER VIII.

Through the Woods into Canada.—Hard Travelling.—The Boundary Line between the United States and Canada.—Arrival at the Bog.—A Shot at a Deer.

THE next morning the trapper and the boys rowed to the head of the lake. There they pulled the boat ashore and made it fast, shouldered their packs, and entered the bush. For the first half-hour the way lay through an alder swamp, where they had to struggle for every foot of advance. Every few moments one or the

other of the boys would step on a slippery root, or catch his foot under some bush growing almost parallel with the ground. Then a frantic struggle to regain the lost balance would follow, a struggle by no means lightened by the unaccustomed pack, a struggle sometimes successful, if to fall against and be upheld by a clump of alders may be called successful. Occasionally they went down altogether, when their packs would show a far from agreeable tendency to strike them on the back of the head and hammer their noses into the mud. At last, to their delight, the ground began to rise, and a few moments later they found themselves out of the swamp and in the forest.

"Whew!" exclaimed Harry, "that was tough. Do let's rest for a few minutes, Mr. Dant."

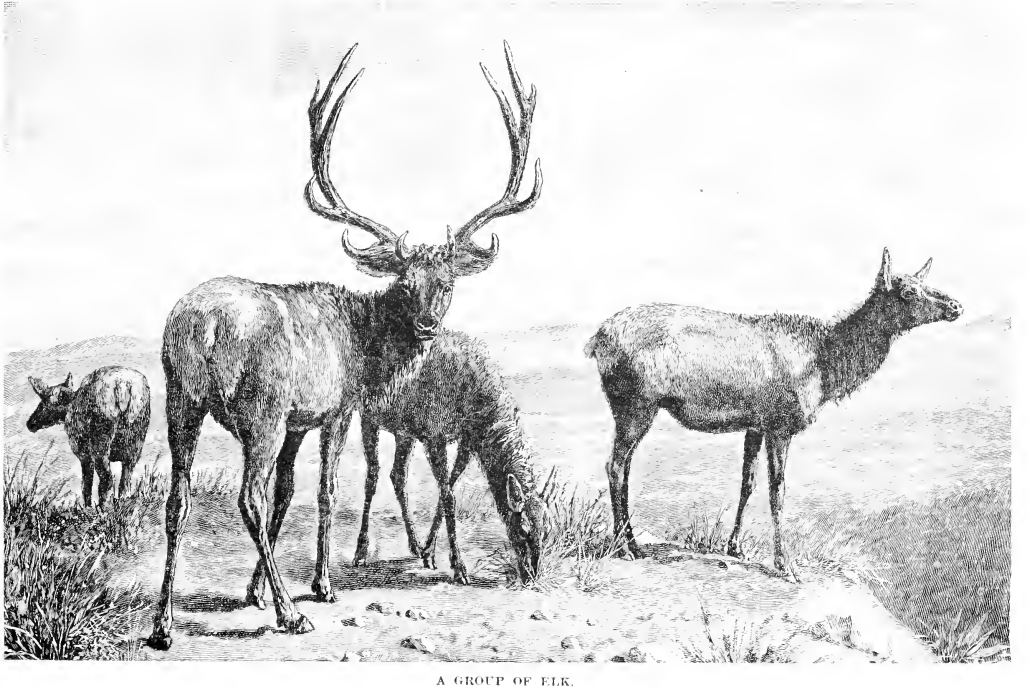
"I don't think any one would mistake it for a turnpike," replied the trapper. "Off with your packs, and we will take a five-minute rest. You mustn't be discouraged yet, for we have only begun to hunt moose, and this is just as much a part of it as firing the rifle. Besides, a pack always feels its heaviest about twenty minutes after the start. You'll get used to it in a little while and not mind it so much. Packing is pretty hard work, particularly when you have to take the travelling as it comes, and just as nature furnishes it. Put on your coats, though. I know you're boiling hot now, but your shirts, where your packs rested, are wet through with perspiration, and you'll be chilled in no time without them."

"How many times did you fall down, Dick?" asked Harry.

"Six," replied Dick; "and every time I went down, my pack flew up and hit me on the back of my head. Besides the falls, I had a lot of stumbles which banged me into the alders. I feel as though I had been ground in a mill."

"I got off with only four downright falls," said Harry. "I slipped into one mud-hole, though. It may have had a bottom, but I didn't find it. It feels as if I had half the swamp in my left shoe. Then if I picked up my hat once, I think I must have picked it up twenty times. I hope we are not going to have much more like that; are we, Mr. Dant?"

"No, we won't have any more quite as bad as that; but I could



A GROUP OF ELK.

take you through travelling down near the settlement that would make you just sigh for that alder swamp. If a man is studying travelling, and wants to know what bad travelling really is, he wants to strike into an old lumber-works. When the forest is cut off in this country so as to let the sun in on to the ground, it always grows up to raspberry bushes and little cherry-trees about as thick as my thumb, both as close together as the hair on your head. Where they come from is more than I can tell, for you won't find them anywhere else or under any other circumstances. But clear the ground and let the sun in on it, and there they'll be every time. Hidden by this thick stuff are all the old logs, tree-tops, and branches the lumbermen have left; and forcing your way along is just one climb, tumble, scratch, and claw, tumble down, pick yourself up, fall down again, and so on. A man who tries it once isn't likely to forget it in a hurry. But we'll never get to Canada at this rate. Let's be up and doing."

So they resumed their way, marching steadily, as nearly as the trapper could judge the time, for forty minutes, and then resting for ten. The travelling varied considerably. Sometimes it was quite good and open, at other times quite rough and bushy. Every thirty or forty yards a fallen tree barred their way, sometimes waist-high, sometimes up to their chins. These had to be climbed over or crawled under, and hard work the boys found it after a while. The only incident that broke the monotony of the march was in connection with one of these fallen trees. A smothered but energetic eloquence caused the trapper and Dick to look behind them. There lay Harry sprawled out on his face on the ground, struggling violently. Tired of climbing over, he had tried to crawl under the fallen trunk of a spruce-tree. He had failed to take the thickness of his pack into consideration, and there he was jammed fast. The trapper soon released him, and said:

"After a person has climbed over about a hundred and fifty of these breast-logs in the course of a forenoon, he begins to watch for chances to get under them with considerable interest. But don't you be fooled. You, Harry, know how it is now. To you, Dick, I would say never try to go under a log with a pack on, unless you

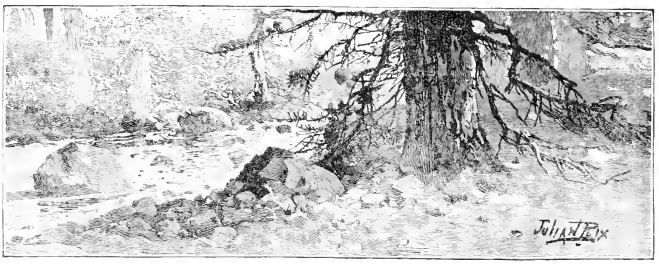
are perfectly sure you can do it, and do it without stooping much. You are almost certain not to make allowance enough for the pack, and if you get hung up, it will take more work out of you to get clear than climbing twenty logs."

About noon the trapper called a halt by the side of a small brook.

"We'd better lunch here and rest for an hour. What do you say?"

The boys were only too willing. Lunch over, the trapper lit his pipe, and looking keenly at his companions, said,

"Well, boys, how goes it? Pretty tired, eh?"



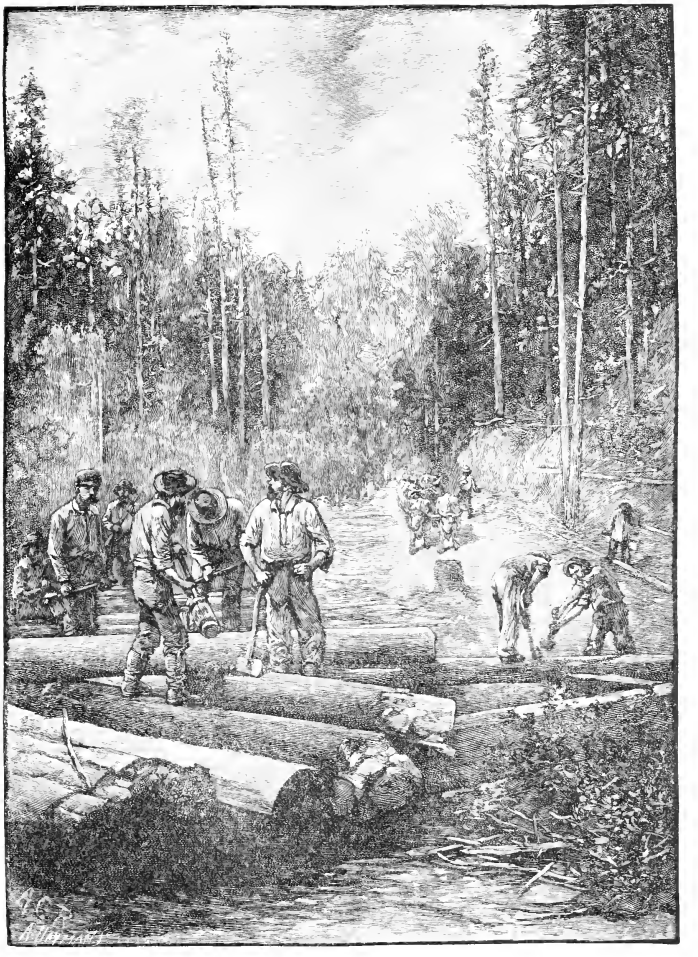
"WE'D BETTER LUNCH HERE AND REST FOR AN HOUR."

"I am beginning to feel rested some, now," replied Dick, "but when we stopped I was quite ready. How my shoulders did ache under the pack-straps! And then I had a pain in the middle of my breastbone that wasn't pleasant."

"So did I," said Harry. "How much farther is it, Mr. Dant?"

"We'll have better travelling after this, and more downhill. I think we'll reach the place where I keep my boat in about two hours and a half after we leave here, if we keep at it as we have done; but we've time enough, and can take it easier. Then you can put some of your stuff into my pack if you like, and go lighter."

To this suggestion the boys wouldn't listen, for they had slyly tried the weight of the trapper's pack by lifting it, and had won-



A LUMBER WORKS.

dered how a man could travel over so rough a country under such a weight. It seemed to them as heavy as a well-filled trunk.

"How far do you think we have come?" asked Dick.

"Well, we've been travelling about five hours, and I should say we had made seven to seven and a half miles."

"Only seven miles and a half?" said Harry.

"Not over that, I should say. Why, how much did you think we had done?"

"I thought we had made twelve or fourteen miles sure," replied Harry. "I've walked four measured miles in an hour at home, and did not work half so hard. Surely, Mr. Dant, we must have made three miles an hour to-day, or at any rate two and a half!"

"That's the way all city people talk who come up here, but they are mistaken all the same. I can't make three miles an hour over such going as we have had to-day without a load, and I can do it a third quicker than you can. When you happen on clear, level walking you do three miles an hour without doubt, but how much of that sort of thing do you find? How many miles an hour do you make when you are climbing over all the breast-logs, or when you are balancing over the roots and things of that kind, or when your hat is knocked off by a bush, or when you stumble and fall? How many miles an hour do you suppose we made in that alder swamp? We were half an hour good in crossing it, and it isn't over five hundred yards wide, if it's that. No, no, don't deceive yourselves. A mile and a half an hour is good average travelling through the woods, take them as they come. But the camp where we are to sleep to-night will never come to us. I think, if you are rested, we had better be moving."

About an hour and a half later the trapper called a halt, and said, "Welcome to Canada, boys."

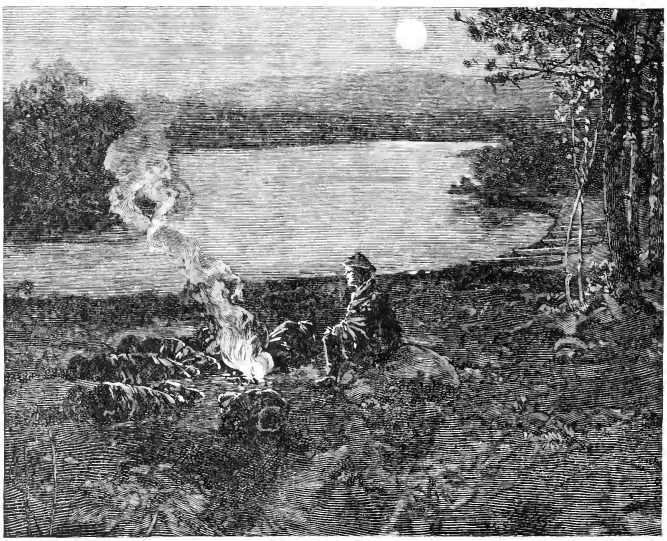
"Are we in Canada?" asked Harry, staring about him as if he had expected to see all the trees bright pink instead of their usual sombre green.

"You're in Canada, sure enough. Why, don't it look as you expected?"

"Come to think of it, I don't know why I should have expected

it to look different, but I did; perhaps because it's always colored different on the maps," replied Harry. "But how do you know so positively we are in Canada? The woods have looked just the same for the last two hours?"

"You're not thirty feet from the boundary line now. Come here, and I'll show it to you. Do you see that stump, and that, and



A LUMBERMAN'S BIVOUAC.

that? They are not the stumps of trees blown down by the wind. They are old and moss-covered; but to me, at any rate, it's just as certain they were cut with an axe as that you stand here. Now look at the trees there and on both sides of you. Don't you see that there is a strip here in which there are no big trees, as there are on both sides of it, and that these small trees are very much closer together? Now, here is an easy tree to climb, and from its top you

can see out some over the country. I should like one of you to go up it and tell me what you see."

Harry was soon in the top of the tree indicated by the trapper. He took one look, and then shouted down, "Oh, Dick, come up here, come up here! Such lots of mountains, and all covered with woods to their very tops! Oh, it's lovely!"

"Don't you see anything else?" shouted back the trapper.

"Yes, I see a road running over the mountains. It looks among the trees like a city street between the houses."

"Where is the end nearest you?" again called the trapper.

"Why, good gracious! It runs right to the foot of this tree, and then up and over the top of this hill."

"That's all. You can come down now whenever you're ready."

Dick had in the mean time also climbed the tree, and had seen what Harry had described.

When they had descended, the trapper said, "Leave your packs here and I'll show you something more."

He led them about a hundred yards away, and there stood a cast-iron obelisk some four feet above the ground, painted white, bearing upon one of its four sides in raised capital letters the words, "National Boundary Line," and on another the words, "Treaty of Washington." The names of the American and British Commissioners occupied the remaining two sides.

Had a friend proposed to show them something in the city, and had that something turned out to be a full-grown moose walking out of a basement area, the boys would have hardly been less prepared for the result. In the heart of a wilderness, where to all appearance the foot of man had never trod before, this plain, prosaic, white iron post rose before them like an apparition.

Their surprise somewhat abated, they fell to examining it with as much care and attention as though it were a new form of bicycle. There was nothing particular to be seen about it, however; for, aside from its locality and purpose, it was as humdrum a piece of cast-iron as could be found anywhere. Beyond that each face was about eight inches wide at the bottom, and six at the top, that

the top ended in a flat four-sided pyramid, and that it was rooted to some considerable depth in the ground, they found little to attract their attention. Their curiosity satisfied in these respects, Harry bestrode the boundary line with one foot in the United States and the other in Canada as indicated by the post, and said:

"Well, Dick, here's something to talk about after we get home, anyway. I am not sure but this side-show alone is worth the price of admission, by which I mean the trouble of getting here."

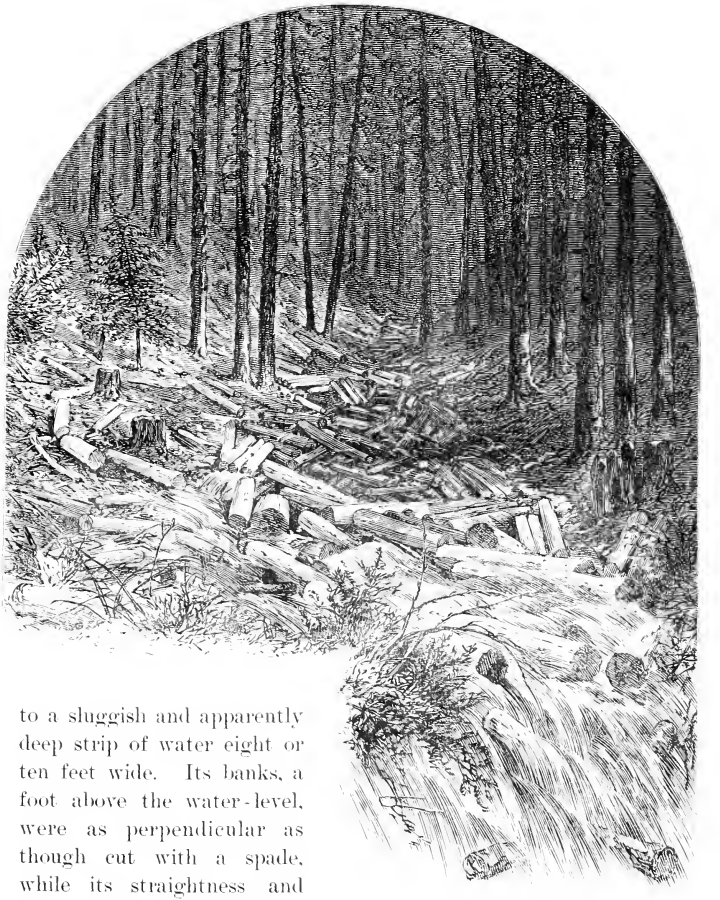
"It certainly is to me," replied Dick. "I heard a paper read before our historical society on this boundary a little while ago. I didn't think then that I should ever see any one stand astride of it."

"I guess we'd better be moving again now, boys," said the trapper. "We will have done a day's work when we reach camp, and so won't go out to-night. After supper I'll tell you all I know about the boundary, and Dick shall tell us what he knows about it. I have been over all this part of it time and again, and know what the settlers say was done when it was laid out; but I never heard the real history of how the place where it should run was decided on."

The travelling was now generally downhill, and comparatively easy. After about an hour the woods began to grow thinner before them, and soon they emerged upon what the trapper called a "bog." They walked upon a carpet of soft whitish moss, like a sponge in feeling, and apparently saturated with water. At intervals small islands of swamp spruce-trees dotted the open surface of the bog. There the trees grew very close together in clumps perhaps fifteen or twenty feet in diameter, the stems of the trees within two or three feet of one another. No trunk exceeds six or seven inches in thickness or thirty feet in height.

"Don't step where there is no moss, or where there is standing water no matter how shallow it is," directed the trapper. "It's nothing but soft mud there, no one knows how deep. But if you keep on the moss, though the water shows at every step, you will be all right."

Skirting the edge of the woods upon the bog, they at last came



THE TRAIL OF THE LUMBERMAN.

to a sluggish and apparently deep strip of water eight or ten feet wide. Its banks, a foot above the water-level, were as perpendicular as though cut with a spade, while its straightness and even width gave it the appearance of an artificial canal.

"We've about reached the end of our foot journey," said the trapper, as the water came in sight. The next moment they stood

beside it, and threw off their packs for the last time with no little satisfaction.

"Whew!" exclaimed Harry. "I had no idea that pack was so heavy. Why, I feel as light as a feather now without it. But where's the boat, Mr. Dant?"

"Well, to tell the truth," replied the trapper, looking very grave, "that's just what I'm trying to find out. It ought to be lying here in the water, tied to this stake by a rope. There's one end of the rope still tied to the stake. Yes, here are the paddles all right. Let me look at that rope again. It's been cut, as sure as you live. I thought it couldn't have broken. This beats the deck! One thing we may be sure of, no man has had any hand in it, for a man would have untied the rope instead of cutting it, and he would surely have taken the paddles, because he couldn't have used the boat without. But there's one comfort, anyway: Unless the boat has flown away, we'll find it somewhere this side of the big dam. You wait here while I go and take a look for it." So saying, the trapper took one of the paddles and disappeared up the stream. Soon after, they saw him crossing on a pile of brushwood forty or fifty yards above.

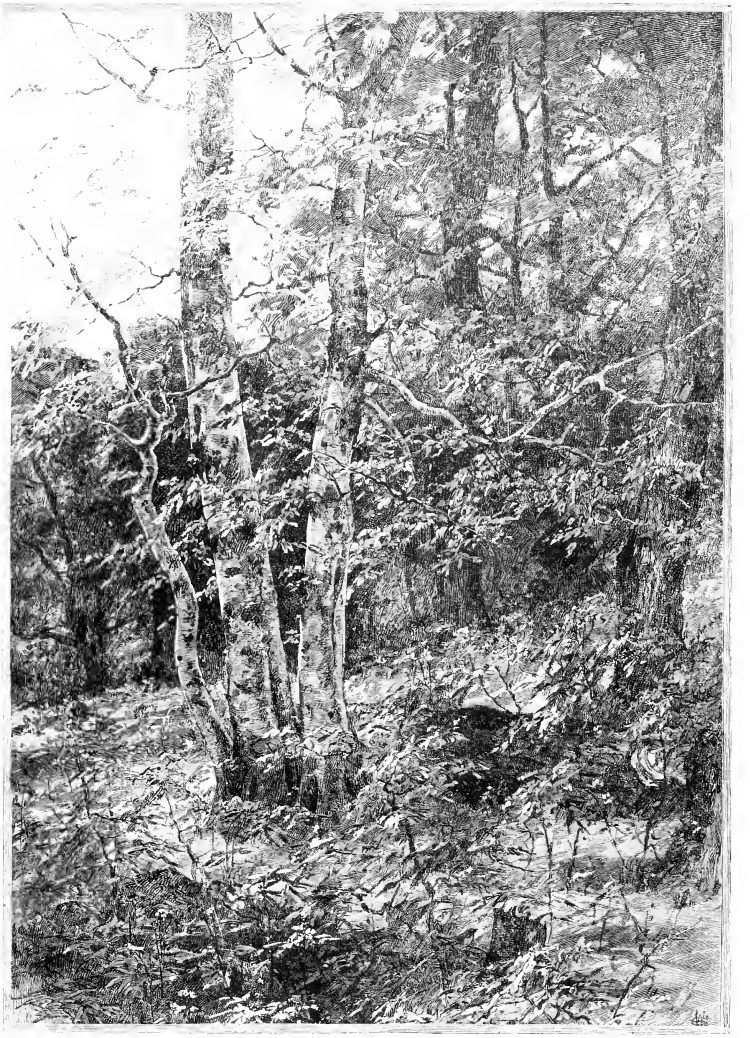
The boys waited an anxious half-hour. Then the trapper appeared, seated in the stern of the boat, driving it towards them with steady strokes of his paddle.

"Here it is, all right, as sound as a dollar and tight as a bottle. I found it down against the dam. Let's load the packs, get aboard and be off to camp."

The boys were astonished to see a boat thirteen feet long, sharp at both ends, shaped something like a birch canoe, though wider—in short, as pretty a boat as they had ever seen.

"How did you ever get such a beauty of a boat 'way in here?" asked Dick, after regarding it for some time with a critical eye.

"I brought it on a hand-sled over from the lake last winter when the snow was deep, and quite a job it was too I can tell you. By the last of February the snow up here gets six or seven feet deep on the level. This weights down the bushes, and covers them and most of the breast-logs so you can travel right over their tops on



GOOD TRAVELLING.

snow-shoes without breaking your gait. Along in March we usually have a spell of weather when it's pretty warm in the middle of the day, while it freezes at night. This hardens the snow so that a hand-sled will hardly cut into its surface at all, unless it's loaded very heavy. That's the time, and in fact the only time, for such a job, and that's when I did it. But the boat was so much longer than the sled and hung over its ends so far that it didn't balance very well. The way it kicked up behind and before was surprising. I had no idea a boat could be so skittish on dry land. It gave me two days and a half of the most solid kind of work. I came just about the same way we took to-day. But do you remember what I said about taking all the chances there were when hunting? Now is the time to remember it, anyway. Harry, you had the last chance at the caribou, so you sit in the middle of the boat. You, Dick, sit in the bow, put a cartridge into the barrel of the rifle, bring it to a half-cock, and hold it across your lap ready to fire. We may see something on the way down. But remember, not an unnecessary sound is to be made or word spoken till we reach camp."

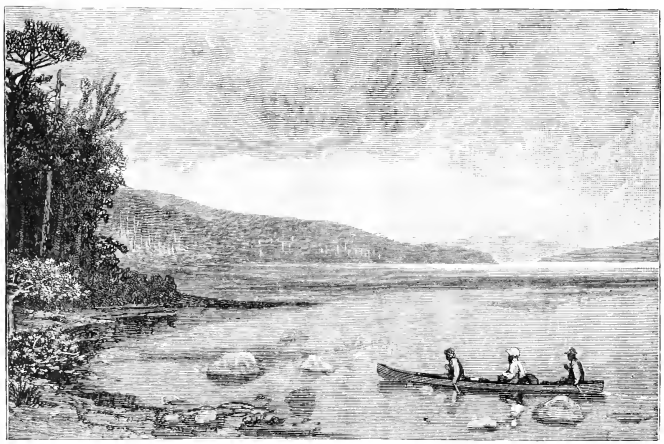
Impelled by the skilful paddle of the trapper, the boat soon emerged into a stream about one hundred feet wide, and turning to the left, moved slowly on. Mountains covered with woods could be seen on every hand. On the left bank the forest approached the water more or less closely, being separated from it by a narrow strip of level ground covered with rank marsh-grass. On the right, the bank was sparsely fringed with dead tamarack-trees and alder bushes, though through occasional openings it could be seen that this was but a fringe, and that the stream was separated from the distant hills by a large bog like that they had seen when they first left the woods.

They soon reached what the boys supposed to be the dam. Here they landed, without a word, on a small island, while the trapper pulled the boat over it. Then re-embarking, they pursued their way.

About half a mile had been passed in silence when the trapper whispered, "Cock your rifle, Dick, and get ready. There's a deer in the next bend on the right."

The boat kept on, both the boys on the alert, though they could neither see nor hear anything. In a few minutes they passed a point which had limited the view before them. A branch about twenty-five feet wide here joined the main stream. On the bank of this branch, some thirty yards distant, stood a deer. The moment the bow of the boat passed the point the deer raised its head, started, looked fixedly at the boat for an instant, and then bounded up the bank. As it turned, Dick fired, but the deer sprang into the bushes and disappeared. "Good gracious, I've missed it!" exclaimed he, in a tone of the keenest disappointment.

"Hush," whispered the trapper. "Not a word now. We'll talk it over when we reach camp."



CHAPTER IX.

Rifle shooting at Game.—Habits of Deer.—The Bog Camp.—Visit from a Skunk.—How the North-eastern Boundary Line was Located.

SOME twenty minutes later the roar of running water was heard, the banks grew higher, and the forest reached the border of the stream. Here the boat was headed into the bank; the trapper landed, held the boat till the boys were ashore, ran it up on the bank, removed the packs, and then said:

"Here we are at camp, and far enough from the hunting-ground so you can say what you like about that miss, Dick."

"Oh, Mr. Dant, I am so sorry! I hope you won't be discouraged. I've always done pretty well at a mark with a rifle, and I thought sure I had that deer covered. I never fired at anything larger than a duck before. I'll try to do better next time if you'll only kindly overlook my poor shooting now."

"Shooting at a mark and shooting at game are quite different things," replied the trapper. "In the one case you shoot at a spot with a good background to show it off and make it distinct. In the other you shoot at a surface pretty much the color of surrounding objects, and usually in a bad light. Men who can do well at a mark and can't do anything at game are common enough. I might say that it was always so at first, when target practice was the only practice with a rifle that had been had. I would, of course, have

liked to see you knock it in its tracks, but for the first time it wasn't so bad."

"I don't see what could be much worse than a clear miss, and such an easy shot too," replied Dick. "I thought I could put every bullet I chose to fire in a space as big as a saucer at that distance."

"You seem to be very sure you missed," said the trapper, with a smile.

"Oh, Mr. Dant, do you really think I hit it?" said Dick, a gleam of hope chasing the gloom of despondency from his face.

"No, Dick, I don't think you hit it—I know you did. The deer turned as you fired. You didn't make any allowance for that, and hit it too far back to lay it out where it stood. But it's got its medicine; that you may be sure of. How do I know it? Because a deer handles its tail just as a dog does, and if you watch its tail you can tell what it's thinking of, just as you can with a dog. A deer's tail is of pretty fair size and white underneath. When you start one and miss it, it goes off flourishing its tail in the air, as much as to say, 'You've got to get up earlier in the morning if you want to get the best of me, old fellow.' But when a deer goes off as that one did, with its tail between its legs like a kicked cur, you may know that it is hurt, and badly too."

"Let's go right back and get it. I'm not tired now at all," exclaimed Harry.

"That isn't the way to get it. That's the way to lose it," replied the trapper. "A deer isn't an easy animal to kill. I've known one to run over a hundred yards with a bullet through it that cut its heart. That deer is hit through the stomach or bowels. Either will be a sure mortal wound; but it can run now for five miles on end. If we let it alone it will only go a little way and then lie down, and there we will find it in the morning. But if we start it again now it will go till it drops, and that will be so far off that the chance of my trailing it all that distance, among so many other tracks as I should find, would be mighty slim. I want you to remember this, especially at night: Get in as many shots at the start as you have a good chance for. Then if the animal gets to

A MONARCH OF THE FOREST.

cover, don't speak a word or make a sound, but leave as quietly as you can. If it's a miss, you won't get another shot—in a thick country like this, anyway. If it's a hit, leave the animal in doubt if you can as to what hurt it. Then in the morning you will either find the animal dead, or so stiff and sore that you can still hunt it with the chances of success all in your favor. There, put that deer out of your heads till to-morrow morning. Nothing can be done about it till then."

During this conversation they had reached camp and begun their preparations for supper and the night. Three sides of the house were of round logs, like that at the lake. The fourth was of rough stones built against a steep bank which had been cut down perpen-

IN WAIT ON THE BOG.

dicularly for the purpose. The interior arrangement was the same except as to the fireplace, which was built of rough slabs of stone in the form of an irregular pointed arch, with the hearth some two feet above the floor of the cabin. It looked much like a natural cave, and the boys thought it very picturesque and in keeping with its surroundings.

"I see you are looking at my fireplace," said the trapper. "Pretty good one, isn't it? It cost me work enough, though. Every one of those stones was fished out of the bottom of the stream and carried up here in my arms. It didn't take me long either to find out that there wasn't any steam heater at the bottom of that water. Whew, wasn't it cold! and didn't it make my hands ache!

"The great trouble about our fireplaces up here is to prevent them smoking. We can't build them quite right, as we have to take the stones just as we find them, and have no mortar. In some of my camps the door has to be left open to make a strong draught, or the fire will smoke you out. A couple of years ago I thought I could get round that by putting in two hollow logs, one end opening out-doors and the other opening at the hearth, so that they would pour two five-inch streams of cold air into the fire. They did the business, and I thought I had just hit the bull's-eye sure. I hadn't any raised bunk in here then, the bed being a heap of fir-boughs on the ground. There was a young country chap with me trying to learn something about trapping. About three or four nights after we fixed the hollow logs, when I was so proud of the way they worked I could hardly sleep, I happened to open my eyes. What should I see by the light of the fire but a skunk walking about the premises, and taking stock of everything just as if it was trying to make up its mind whether it wanted to buy the place or not. I would have been glad just then to have made it a present of the camp if it would only let me move out without making any fuss about it.

"Well, if you could only have seen that skunk—through a long range telescope, that is—you would have been pleased. If a skunk only acted as well as it looks, it would make a first-rate ladies' pet, but it don't. First that skunk would poke its nose into a corner and snuff round a while. Then it would come out, twist its head on one side, and run its eye over the wall, as if it was wondering whether the man who built it called himself a mason. Then it would inspect the joiner-work about the door and the table, cocking its head first on one side and then on the other, looking as knowing as a horse-jockey. I knew our turn to be interviewed would come soon, and perhaps I wasn't scared! I was afraid the skunk would run over the lad and wake him, and that then he would jump, or do something of that kind. If that happened I knew there'd be a regular Waterloo, and that we wouldn't be the victors either.

"When the skunk wasn't looking, I quietly pulled my blanket

up over my head, leaving only a little peek-hole to look out of, and waited. By-and-by it got round to the bunk and began to take it in. It walked over my legs and over the boy's legs two or three times, then it came up on to my chest, and I began to think the Day of Judgment had come. My, how still I did keep! I held my breath till it seemed that the next moment I would blow up with a bang like a bomb-shell. How long this lasted I can't say. It seemed like a week, but I hardly think it was really quite as long as that. Well, by-and-by, when I was just about in a state of cold collapse, it walked up to the hole in one of the draught logs and

SKUNK.

crawled in. The minute I saw its tail disappear I was up as if I had been shot out of a gun, grabbed the first thing I could see, which was my hat, shoved it into the hole in the log, and roared for the lad to turn out and light the lamp.

"It took quite a little while to make him understand what was up, he was so dazed with sleep. When he had at last got his wits together and lit the lamp, I made him go out and get some damp chips and rake some live coals together on the hearth. All this time I was holding my hat in that hole for dear life. When everything was ready I shovelled up the coals on an old piece of tin I

had, took out my hat, popped the coals into the hole in the draught log, put the wet chips on them, and began to fan them with my hat so as to drive the smoke down the hole to smoke the skunk out. In a few minutes I began to think I smelled burned hair. Then I could hear the skunk coughing and sneezing, the sound gradually working down the log until at last it stopped. I waited a while, and hearing nothing more, poured water in the hole to put the fire out. I then had the boy light that lantern you see up there with a reflector in it, which we call a jack-lamp, and told him to take a three-cornered stick of firewood, and go round outside and push it into the hole in the draught log. This would let air in, but keep the skunk out if it took the notion to make us another call, as I thought likely. I warned him to be careful to see the skunk had gone before he went near the log. Now, the boy had come up to learn trapping, and he was so swollen with zeal that the buttons would hardly stay on his shirt. What did that idiot do but drop his stick of firewood, pick up a trap he saw lying outside, set it in the mouth of the draught log, and chain up the trap to a bush growing alongside the cabin. While he was doing that I fortified the other log, and when he got back we turned in again, I without a suspicion of what he had been up to.

"Next morning when I awoke the boy was still snoozing away as innocent as a lamb. I thought I'd turn out and get breakfast, and let him sleep till it was ready, he seemed so comfortable. Just as I was going to move the rattle of a chain struck my ear. Now, there wasn't a chain except a trap-chain within fifty miles, and when a trap-chain rattles that generally means that something is rattling it. You may believe it made me prick up my ears mighty sharp. It didn't take me long to find out that the sound was inside the camp. I got up on my hands and knees, and was just going to get on my feet to investigate, when I was almost paralyzed to see the back of that skunk under the fir-boughs of the bunk not more than four feet from me. It was all plain enough then. The boy had trapped it, and when it found it couldn't get away it had burrowed under the side of the cabin and up among the fir-boughs which made our bed. The bed had been used a long time, and

THE BOG VALLEY.

had been boughed down fresh pretty often, so that it was maybe a foot or so thick. Into this the skunk had burrowed as far as the chain of the trap would let him, and there he was in plain sight, the top of his back under not more than three or four inches of small dry twigs.

"I don't know when I have been so taken aback. If the skunk

A TRAPPER'S CABIN.

rose in its wrath, it would lift up the twigs and be right in among us. Though it had behaved like a gentleman and a scholar so far, a skunk is not an animal to excite much confidence in any one who knows it. It isn't often that I am at a loss what to do in the woods, but this time I was puzzled. I finally concluded to cut a pointed stake, put some food and water outside to coax the skunk out, and then to watch. If it went out, then I could jam the stake down and block the hole so that it couldn't get back.

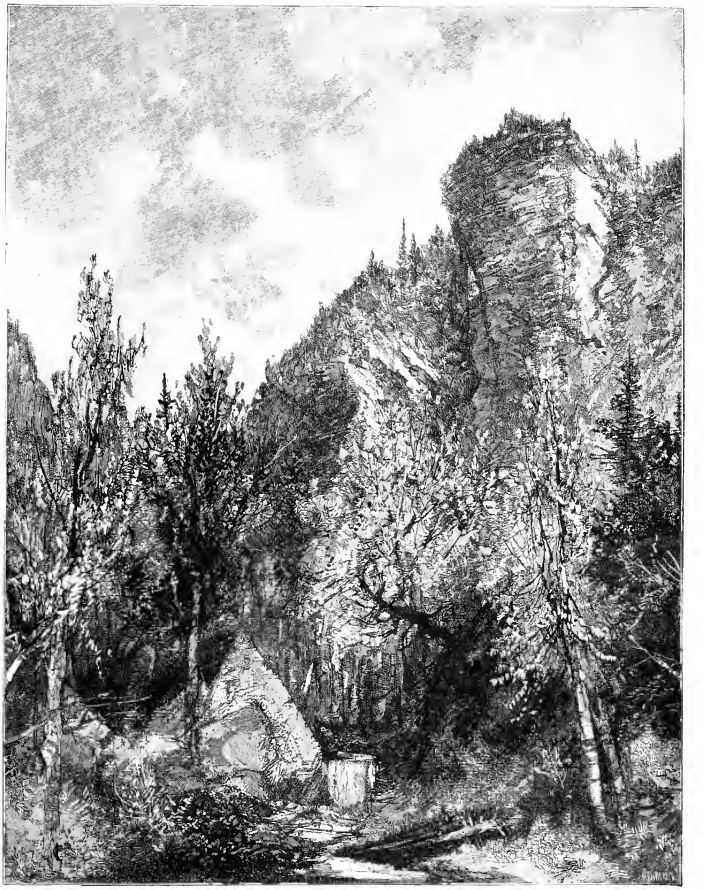
"I went outside and cut my stake. When I came back there lay the boy still fast asleep. I stirred him up. 'Did you set a trap for that skunk?' I asked. 'Yes,' he answered, 'have I got it?' with a grin of delight on his face as though he had won the first prize in a big lottery. 'Yes,' I said, 'you've got it fast enough; and now that you have got it, what are you going to do with it? It rather strikes me that you have got us too. Come here and take a look.' He took one glance, and his face changed as though some one had poured cold water down his back. His interest in that skunk was gone.

"I was just going to tell him to take some meat and water outside, when the skunk, frightened perhaps at the sound of our voices, crawled back through its hole. As soon as it was outside I jammed down the stake in front of it, and told the boy to hold it down for dear life. I didn't dare to drive it with my axe, as I would have liked to do. Then I got a long pole and drove a nail into it, took my rifle, and climbed up on the roof of the camp. It was a scene for an artist. There I was, sprawled out at full length on the cabin roof, with just one eye over the edge, hooking away with the pole at the chain of the trap, trying to get it loose so the skunk could go off. I had to be mighty careful about it, too, for fear I'd hurt the skunk; for while it was so close to camp I had a great regard for its feelings.

"I guess it took me at least half an hour to get that chain loose, and then I had to wait another half-hour before the skunk would make up its mind that it was free and could go away. Finally it walked off, and when it was at a safe distance I shot it. You'd better believe that when I had finished with that skunk and had my trap again, I felt as though I'd been through the wars and was the only man of my regiment left alive.

"Whew, what a long yarn I've spun! Now, Dick, you tell us what you know about the boundary, and we'll call it a day and turn in."

While the trapper had been telling his story a substantial meal had been prepared and eaten, and everything made ready for the night. The trapper and Harry threw themselves down on the bunk,



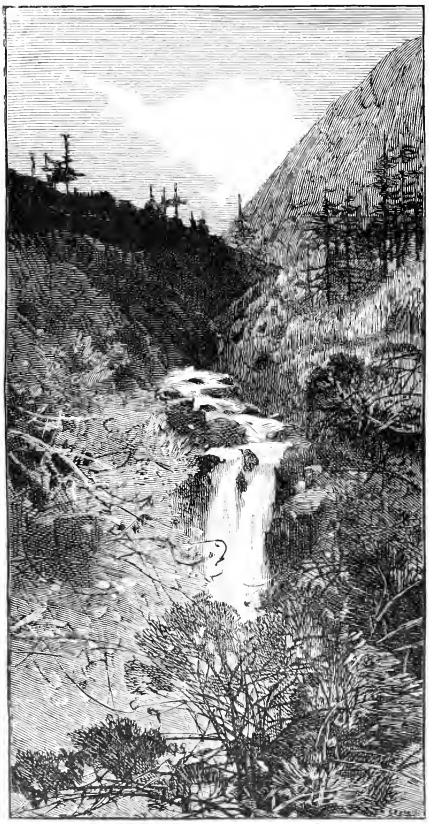
IN THE BOUNDARY RANGE.

while Dick took his place before the fire on "the deacon's seat," and began.

"As I never heard the story but once, I can't remember it all, but it was something like this:

"The original treaty acknowledging the independence of the United States was made in 1783. It described the boundary which should divide the United States from the British possessions. The boundary line was to run from the north-west angle of Nova Scotia. What was then known as Nova Scotia included a part of what is now known as New Brunswick. In order to fix this angle, the treaty directed that a line should be run due north from the source of the St. Croix River to the highlands which divide the streams that flow into the St. Lawrence River from those that flow into the Atlantic Ocean. This seems all very plain and simple. But unfortunately three different rivers had been called the St. Croix, and each of them was well provided with branches, each of which branches had a source. It was found impossible to agree upon which of these three rivers was the St. Croix of the treaty, to say nothing of the various sources. The British tried to levy taxes, and arrested American settlers in the disputed territory, which naturally made the Maine people very angry. So there was one constant quarrel over the boundary from the ocean to Vermont. We claimed almost to the St. Lawrence River. They claimed a great part of Maine. The feeling on both sides was very bitter. Finally, in 1842, they sent over Lord Ashburton, who was known and liked here, to settle the matter. The English story was that just before Lord Ashburton came over, Mr. Sparks, the American historian, found among the papers of the French Government a letter written by Benjamin Franklin, which referred to a map on which he had marked the boundary line agreed on when the treaty was made. Mr. Sparks was said to have found the map. On it the boundary was marked with a red line exactly as the British claimed it. Mr. Sparks was said to have sent a copy of the map and letter to Daniel Webster, who kept them under lock and key. He was forced to use them, however, though secretly, to make our Senate confirm Lord Ashburton's treaty, which gave seven-twelfths of the disputed territory

to us, and five-twelfths to Great Britain. The English Government found this out, or believed they had found it out, only after the treaty was signed. Our people have, I believe, always claimed that Mr. Sparks's map was made and marked long before the Revolution, and referred to some old French claim, and that it was not and could not be the map referred to in the Franklin letter.

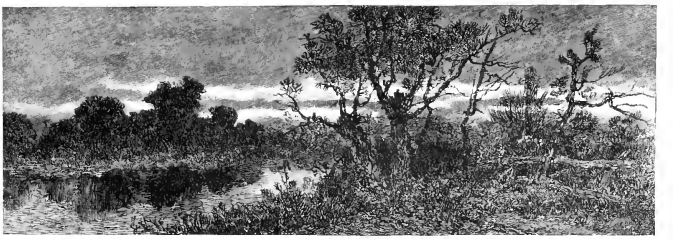


ON THE WAY TO THE ST. LAWRENCE.

"As soon as they found this out, the British Government ordered a search for the map and letter to be made. No map which could be that referred to in the Franklin letter could be found. But another old map was found on which the boundary line was marked out in red just as we claimed it. The people of both countries insisted that they were cheated in this treaty, poor Lord Ashburton being abused in England like a pickpocket. That's all I know about it."

"Now, Mr. Dant, you tell us what you know," said Harry.

"Well, I don't know so very much. I know that this portion of the line, from the head-waters of the St. John River almost to the Vermont State line, goes wandering through this wilderness, following the top of the ridge dividing the waters which flow into the ocean from those flowing into the St. Lawrence River. When they laid out the boundary, not long after 1842, they cut a lane through the woods two rods wide the whole length of the line, clearing every growing thing of any size out of it. They also set up those iron monuments at intervals. It was a part of the lane you saw from the top of that tree this afternoon, which you called a road; and you described it very well when you said that it looked like a city street running between the houses. As is always the case when land is cleared of large forest-trees and then left to nature, other kinds of trees spring up; and it's the difference in appearance between the old forest and the second growth which makes the line, from a distance, look like a road. It looks the same in this respect from one end to the other, and I shouldn't wonder if it continued to be just as unmistakable for a hundred years to come. There, that's all I know about it. Now let's turn in so that we can get an early start to-morrow."

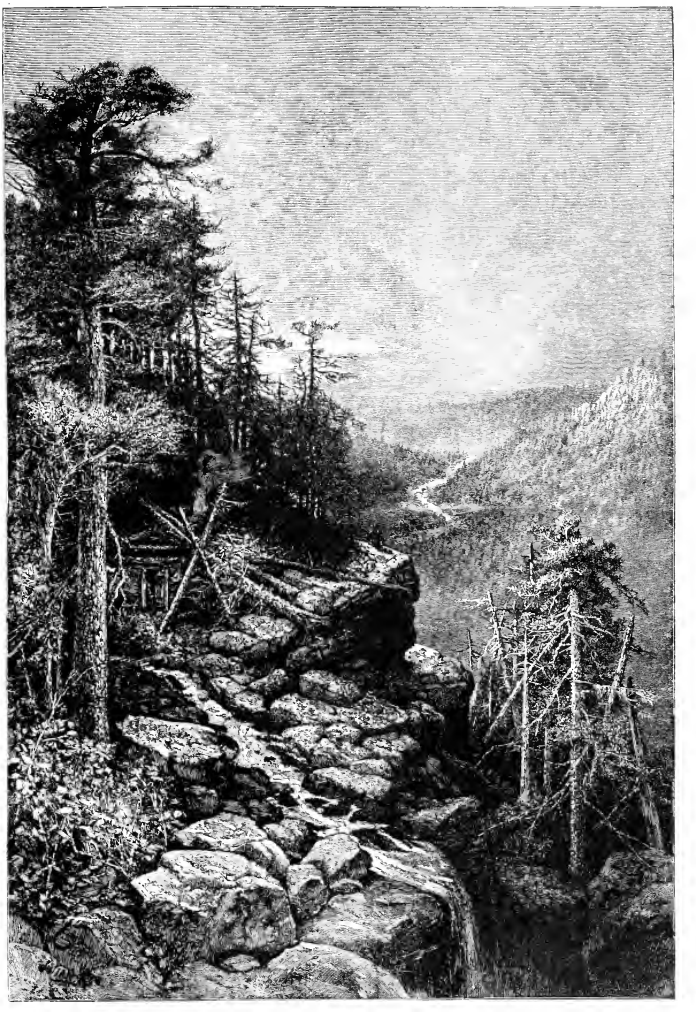


CHAPTER X.

Trailing a Wounded Deer.—"A Crack Shot."—Encounter with Caribou.—A Dead Deer.—A Deer-sled —A Tump-line.—Coasting on a Deer.

AS they paddled up the stream the next morning to search for Dick's deer, the trapper, as was his custom, told them what he proposed to do, and how they were to co-operate.

"I expect we will find that deer as dead as a door-nail," he said. "Still, we ought to take all the chances. When deer think they are pursued, they have a trick of taking a course shaped like a fish-hook. They start at the end of the hook the fish-line would be tied to, and go pretty straight till they think it's time to rest. Then they turn round, and halt about where the point of the hook



OVERLOOKING THE BOG VALLEY.

would be so that they can watch their back track. So, in still hunting we don't follow on the exact trail more than enough to be sure we are going right. In every kind of hunting I know anything about, nine-tenths of the skill required lies in seeing your game before it sees you; the other tenth consists in putting the bullet in a mortal spot when the chance to fire comes.

"But in following up a wounded animal, particularly now, when there is no snow on the ground, this won't answer. I know where it started from. There I will study its track until I can be pretty sure to recognize it again; for I shall find hundreds of other tracks crossing it in all directions, and it's only on that one particular trail that there is anything for us. The wind, what there is of it, is all right. Since I must lead, I'll carry the rifle, as it should be ready to fire at once. As I said before, I expect to find the deer dead. I also expect to see it before it sees me, if it isn't dead. But then things don't always turn out just as we expect. If the deer is alive, and I see it first, you, Dick, shall have the chance to finish it; but if it is alive, and sees or hears me before I see it, it may jump up to run. In that case there will be no time to pass the rifle to you, and I will have to shoot. Remember, not a word is to be spoken. Look where you put your feet, and step on nothing that will crack or make a noise. Don't let your clothes brush against the bushes. You'll have plenty of time to be careful, for we will go very slow. If I hold up my hand, stop where you are until I beckon for you to come on. If I hold up my hand and then beckon at once, that means that I see the deer, that it's alive, and that Dick is to come up to shoot. Then, Dick, take time and walk as though you were stepping among eggs. But you, Harry, stay where you are. Two are twice as likely to make a noise as one."

Ascending the branch of the stream, they landed where the deer had stood. The trapper spent some ten minutes in careful study of the deer's tracks. Each individual footprint was separately and deliberately examined. Then throwing a cartridge into the barrel of his repeating rifle, he ascended the low bank and entered the bushes. The boys followed. In and among the bushes paths ran in every direction—not the clear and open path of the

settlement, for the stems of the bushes, often as thick as a man's wrist, projected from either side across and mingled their branches together over the narrow openings. Indeed they were apparent

ON THE BOG STREAM.

rather because the ground in them was bare of vegetation than because they afforded an open way. In these lanes, if we may so call them, the earth was carpeted with fallen leaves still damp from the night air, or, where they had been swept away, bare ground appeared.

There was no need to recall their recent lesson to decide that these lanes were deer-roads, for they were literally trodden with tracks, like a barn-yard. As the boys saw them running and branching in every direction, hope sank within them. How could even a hound follow one individual track among these hundreds? How much less one who must rely on sight alone to direct him!

Still the trapper kept on; slowly, it is true, often pausing, sometimes studying the ground keenly for two or three minutes or more without advance, then resuming his way. The boys followed, stopping when he stopped, moving forward when he set the example, always mindful of his caution to make no noise. At length they emerged upon the open bog, a level expanse dotted with islands of stunted spruce-trees, and covered with the same yellowish-

gray water-soaked moss they had passed over the day before. The forest-clad hills rose from its farther edge an eighth of a mile away.

The trapper paused, and beckoning the boys to approach, said in a low tone:

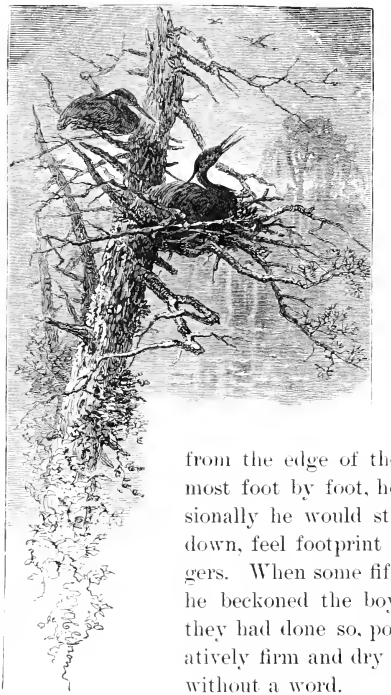
"That deer was worse scared than I had hoped. It has crossed the bog and taken to the woods. We're going to have a tough job. I will go ahead as far as I know I am right. Then when I beckon, you come up and hold that point for me, so that if I have to try back I may start again all right; and so on till we are across the bog. Remember what I told you yesterday, and keep clear of bare ground and standing water, or you may get mired, or worse. If the bog waves under you like thin ice, you needn't be afraid. Though there is water underneath, the surface on which you stand is so matted together with roots as tough as twine that it'll hold you all right. But it's as well to make a sure thing of it, so keep, say, ten or fifteen feet apart while crossing such going; that is, if we find it."

CAMP IN THE WOODS.

"Have you seen any blood, Mr. Dant?" whispered Harry.

"No, and I hardly expected to, hit where that animal is hit. So far I'm right all the same, but over this bog it's different. The trail of our deer will be plain enough, but so will every other deer-trail. This moss don't hold a sharp impression like soft earth, and

it will only be at intervals that I'll find a track that I can be sure is the one we want. I'll do my best, though, and if we fail, as we may, it sha'n't be for lack of trying, anyway. Our deer stopped running, and began to walk about ten feet back. It was beginning to feel pretty sick then. It won't go far after it gets to cover again. If we can only carry the trail across this bog we'll be all right, but to do that will take all I know, and perhaps a little more. However, there is a chance, and as I told you before, in hunting we must take all the chances there are."



A TENANT OF THE BOG.

The trapper then resumed his task, the boys watching him anxiously from the edge of the bushes. He advanced almost foot by foot, hesitating frequently. Occasionally he would stop altogether, and stooping down, feel footprint after footprint with his fingers. When some fifty yards had been so passed, he beckoned the boys to approach; and when they had done so, pointed to a piece of comparatively firm and dry ground, and then moved on without a word.

The boys examined the place the trapper had indicated by his gesture. At least twenty different deer-tracks were plainly imprinted on it. True, some were a little larger and others a little smaller. But which, if any, had been made by their deer seemed to them a hopeless riddle. Again they waited, and waited long. Twice the trapper returned to where they were standing, and without a word,

took up the trail afresh from that point. His thin lips were compressed until but a straight line represented his mouth, and there was a glitter in his keen eyes they had never seen before. He would have been indeed but a careless observer who would not have recognized in that face the face of one who would not accept of failure where success was possible.

And so at last, when the patience of the boys had long been quite exhausted, they stood at the edge of the forest. Here the trapper again left them, was gone about ten minutes, and then returning, said in his natural tone of voice:

"I don't think it worth while to go any farther, boys. It's tough luck, I know, to lose an animal this way, but it will happen. We can go as far as I went, or a little farther if you like, though it won't make much difference in the result."

He started on and they followed.

"Here's where I stopped," at length he said. "Never mind, Dick, it was a good shot for the first time. I don't know that I have seen a much more successful one—that is, for the first time. I had a college student with me once, as nice a fellow as I ever saw. It was at night, and we were in the boat just about where you were when you fired yesterday. We drove out a deer on to the opposite bank, and it went on the jump too. He had a fifty-calibre long-magazine Winchester rifle—one fit for a grizzly bear. He brought that big rifle to his hip, not to his shoulder, and in that dim, uncertain light, with that deer bouncing like an India-rubber ball, he laid it out as stiff as a stake with a bullet through its neck. Well, now, perhaps it didn't make me stare! Here, thought I, is the kind of a man to have along with you. If we don't have all the game we want this trip, and to spare, it will be strange.

"I gave that fellow at least fifty chances after that, every one of them ever so much better, and he never touched hide nor hair again. Oh, the things he used to do and not do, they were enough to turn a man's hair gray. I'd just make up my mind he had done all the foolishness that man could, when he would break out in some fresh place, and pretty near paralyze me with wonder. We

were camped over near a pond some four miles east of here. He went alone to the pond one morning about sunrise, and saw three caribou. The pond was about a quarter of a mile from camp, and the caribou were on the other side of the pond from him. He sneaked up to the edge of the water behind some bushes, and fired all the cartridges he happened to have in the magazine of his rifle at them—some four or five, I think. As usual, he missed every shot, the caribou skipping round a good deal, but not going off. That's often the case when the pond is small and surrounded by big hills. The game can't tell the shot from its echo, and if they can't scent the danger they don't know which way to go. Well, that fellow leaned his rifle against the bushes, and went back to camp for more cartridges. He was bound to be fixed that time, so he took fifty, told me what had happened, and we went back together. When we got to the edge of the woods where we could look out, there stood, within twenty-five feet of his rifle, and between us and it, as handsome a bull-caribou as I ever saw.

"But you are not of that kind, Dick, I know. Your shot was much more successful than first shots generally are, and I congratulate you on it."

So saying, the trapper grasped Dick by the hand, and with some little violence dragged him around to the other side of the clump of bushes near which they had been standing.

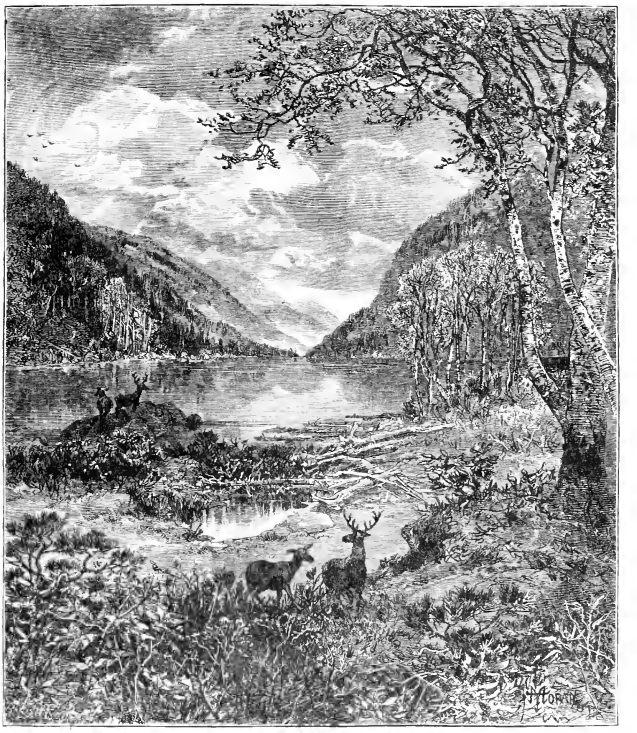
"What do you say to that?" he exclaimed. At their feet lay a fine buck, stone-dead.

The sudden revulsion of feeling, from utter despair to the complete realization of his hopes, was almost too much for Dick. With open mouth and eyes, and with trembling lips, he gazed upon his fallen prize as though struck dumb.

The trapper looked at him a moment with some surprise, and then laying his hand on his shoulder, said:

"I beg your pardon, Dick, a thousand times. I see I've carried my silly joke too far. I felt so good at finding it after the tough work we had following it across the bog, that I didn't stop to think that what might be fun to me would be none to you."

Dick turned instantly, and grasping the trapper's unoccupied



"WE CAMPED NEAR A POND ABOUT FOUR MILES FROM HERE."

hand in both of his, said: "Don't speak to me in that way, Mr. Dant. How can I, how can we, ever thank you for what you have *done*—for what you are doing for us every day? We came upon you vagabonds, homeless and helpless, and you treat us as though we were paying you ten dollars a minute instead of nothing but thanks and promises."

"There, there, there," said the trapper, not a little moved. "Let's call it square. You and Harry wait here, while I go to get the

boat. I can bring it up to within about two or three hundred yards. We'll load the deer aboard and take it down below the camp and dress it. I don't like to dress an animal on the hunting-ground, for the scent of the blood and offal will scare the game away for a long time."

So saying, he disappeared. When he returned, after the lapse of half an hour, the boys had quite recovered their equanimity and were overflowing with delight.

"It looks as if it was going to give us all we wanted to do to carry it down to the boat," said Dick, surveying his prize with extreme satisfaction.

"If you grab it by one horn, Dick, and I by the other, and we then pull together, I think it will follow."

Thus, with occasional halts to rest, they brought their game to the water-side, Harry marching in front, singing, "Lo! the conquering hero comes." Their undertaking came to an end where the bank was but a few inches above the water. The boat was pulled ashore, tipped upon one side so that it was close to the deer, and the deer was rolled into it. The boat was then let down on to its bottom and pushed into the water, with the deer on board.

"Well, I must say there's nothing like knowing how to do things," exclaimed Harry, surprised to see how easily a task was accomplished which he had supposed would tax their energies to the utmost.

"Yes, it usually makes a difference," quietly replied the trapper.

As he paddled the boat down-stream, he asked,

"How did you think we were to carry that deer, Harry?"

"I thought you'd sling it on a pole, or some such way. The last thing I should have thought of would have been to skate it over the ground as you did. I had no idea it would slide so easy."

"The body of a deer is not quite as slippery as the tricks it will try to get the best of any danger which may threaten it, but it is very nearly. Drag them head-first, so that they move with the grain of the hair, and they can be pulled over even pretty rough ground much easier than a person would suppose who had never tried it. We sometimes slide downhill on them in winter."

Both boys were anxious to know all about it.

"I don't mean that we slide down, then drag them up, and then slide down again, just for fun. I only mean that when taking a deer to camp, if I come to a pretty steep and fairly clear hill I often get astride of the carcass at the top and slide down to the bottom. Very good sleds, too, they make on a pinch.

THE EDGE OF THE WOODS.

"Eight or nine years ago, a man who went by the name of Billy spent a winter trapping with me. He was a good deal older than I, a real good trapper and first-rate woodsman. Like most middle-aged men who have spent the greater part of their lives alone in the woods, he was as queer a fellow as you'd find in a week's railroad travel. He never had tasted liquor or tobacco, tea or coffee, in

his life, and you could rely on him to do anything that he thought ought to be done as you could rely on the rising of the sun. We used to separate every Monday morning at daybreak, each taking his own route over his part of our trapping-lines, and not meet again or see a living soul until the next Saturday evening. That's the way trappers have to do; going over a fresh line every day, travelling from the first peep of dawn till the last gleam of light, camping every night in a different place, and skinning every animal they have taken during the day, and stretching its skin before they sleep, if it takes till midnight. It's a hard life, a very hard life, a harder life than anything I can say will give you an idea of.

"You might suppose that a person who had a chance to talk but once a week would keep it up pretty well then, and that's the way I used to do. But as for Billy, he was like a post with a hole in it; beyond a grunt, I could hardly coax a sound out of him. I sometimes almost expected to hear his jaws creak like an old rusty gate, he used them so seldom. This was his ordinary habit; but when he thought the time to talk had come, he had a gift of eloquence that was fully as surprising as his usual silence. Let things go wrong, or get him mad, and he was as peppery as he was good-hearted, unselfish, and trustworthy, and at the top of his voice he would pour out a stream of remarks, which he never learned at Sunday-school, for fifteen minutes on end, or longer than that if his wind held out.

"I am afraid I used to bother Billy more than I ought to have done. He was as solemn as an owl, and not much more sociable. If there was anything in this world he did hate it was any form of skylarking. But as for me, when Sunday morning came and I knew I would be warm and dry a whole day and night, with nothing to do but to eat, sleep, mend my clothes, and be happy, if we had had any kind of luck with our traps during the week I used to feel mighty frisky. In those days, if there was any froth in my bottle, the stopper didn't fit tight enough to keep it in long.

"We had been off together after meat and shot a deer, and

took turns in towing it over the snow to camp with a tump-line."

"What's a tump-line, Mr. Dant?" asked Dick.

"It's a broad band of leather, with a moose-hide thong about

HEAD OF THE BOG STREAM.

eight feet long attached to each end of the band. The Indians use them to pack with. They arrange a blanket with these thongs in such a way that the load may be pursed up in it and tied. Indians generally carry the load on their shoulders, with the broad part of

the tump-line bearing against their forehead; but white men usually arrange the broad part over the chest, or over one shoulder and under the opposite arm, changing from one to the other from time to time when they feel like it. It has the advantage of a knapsack, since it doesn't weigh anything and takes up so little room when it is not needed, and it's useful for lots of purposes besides packing; but it makes the meanest kind of pack to carry, it balances so badly. If it wasn't that I was off on another trail, I'd tell you how Billy nearly hung himself with one. Perhaps I will some time.

"Well, we were getting near camp, and as it was my turn, I was in harness towing the deer. Billy, being unloaded, was some little distance ahead. It was bitter cold, and the light, powdery snow lay three feet deep or more through the woods. We were on snow-shoes. We came to a steep hill, near the bottom of which was our camp. The windfalls and bushes were weighed down and pretty well covered with snow, and there lay the track of our snow-shoes as if we had made it on purpose. It was just the place for a slide; so I rolled the deer on its back, got astride of it, pulled its head up towards my breast by its ears, called to Billy to clear the road, and shoved off.

"I supposed Billy would step off one side and give me a show; but not he. He thought it was some of my foolishness; and when he once had that notion in his head, he wouldn't have looked round or taken the slightest notice if the Emperor of all the Russias had been roaring at him. I shouted to him the best I knew, but he was right on his dignity, and pranced along, looking as square to the front as if he was having his picture taken. I couldn't stop the deer, and I couldn't steer it out of the trench made by our snow-shoes. Either he must get out of the way, or something was bound to happen.

"It did happen, and mighty quick too. The deer mounted his snow-shoes, threw him down, ground him clean out of sight in the floury snow, and rode right over his body down to the bottom of the hill. As soon as the deer stopped and I could get off, I didn't waste any time in explanations or apologies, but just lit out for the

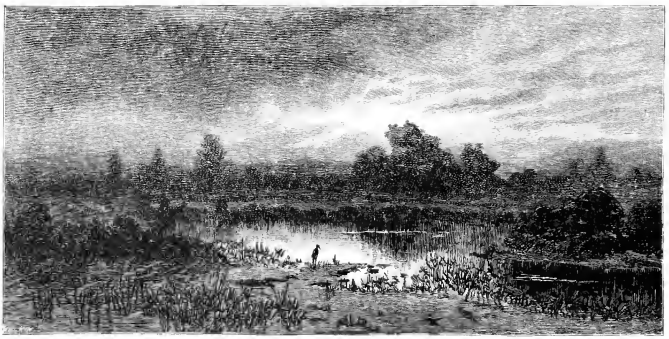
bush at my best gait. I have heard it said, 'There is a time for all things.' When Billy's mad was fully up, it was time to move—not talk. I knew mighty well I couldn't get much pleasure out of his company — just then, at any rate — and had better make myself scarce.

"As I was making for cover, the woods and hills fairly echoed with his remarks. I stuck it out in the woods until I was as hungry as a wolf and as cold as a frog. It must have been pretty near nine o'clock at night when I sneaked back, thinking he'd be asleep, and that I could let the supper go, and turn in mighty quiet so as not to disturb him. But he was laying for me. I'd no sooner stuck my nose inside the door than he jumped for me. I didn't wait for any foolishness, but got out of there as quick as I knew how. He chased me, but he didn't stand a show while I had my snow-shoes on and he had none. He soon found that out and stopped. Then he began to talk to me in a way fit to make a man's hair curl. He'd give it to me for a while, and then make a dive to catch me. Then he'd stop, give me some more of his opinion of the kind of chap I was, and then make another dive, and so on. By-and-by he was so clean pumped out that he couldn't say another word. Then I began. My! how I did talk to him! butter wouldn't melt in my mouth. I said everything I could think of to smooth matters over; and when I couldn't think of anything more, I began back at the beginning and said it all over again. I offered, if he would help me, to drag that deer right then up to the top of the hill, and that he might ride me down if he liked—anything and everything for peace. I didn't tell him that I knew he'd cut it up hours before. 'Speech is silver, silence is gold,' is another of the good things I've heard.

"Finally, either my persuasions or the cold—for the thermometer must have been more than twenty degrees below zero—pacified him and peace was declared. Still, until he turned in I took precious good care to keep between him and the door of the camp that night."

"He must have looked funny when he first dug himself out of the snow," said Harry.

"That's what I thought when I got to the bottom of the hill," replied the trapper; "but the fun for me was all gone out of it long before a treaty of peace was made. If the thing was to have been done over the next day, I would have been right glad to trade places with him. The way it turned out, if there was any laugh at all in it, it was on his side, not mine. It was mighty cold comfort that I got out of that Sunday."



CHAPTER XI.

Venison.—The Trapper's Refrigerator; its Lock and Key.—Beaver.—Beaver Dams.—Beaver Food.—The Beaver's House.—The Beaver's Food-pile.—The Boat Thieves.

BELOW the camp boat-landing, where the trapper and his companions went to dress their deer, the character of the stream changed. Rocks appeared above its surface, the current quickened, the protruding stones became more frequent, until at length the brown water, so smooth and oily above, broke into foam, and took its way to the sea through the overarching evergreen forest, a narrow, raging mountain torrent.

Having converted the deer into venison, they returned with it to the camp boat-landing.

"If you would like to see my refrigerator," said the trapper,

"take a load of meat and come along." He led them a short distance. There a strong stream, a yard or so wide, burst from under an abrupt forest-covered bank, and ran into the bog stream about thirty feet distant. Near its source its bed had been enlarged, deepened, and stoned up, until it appeared like a well, into which the water flowed on one side and escaped at the other. "Put your hand in that water for a minute," said the trapper. Both boys did so.

"Whew!" exclaimed Harry, withdrawing his hand and squeezing it with the other. "I never did see such freezing water. It makes my hand fairly ache, it's so cold."

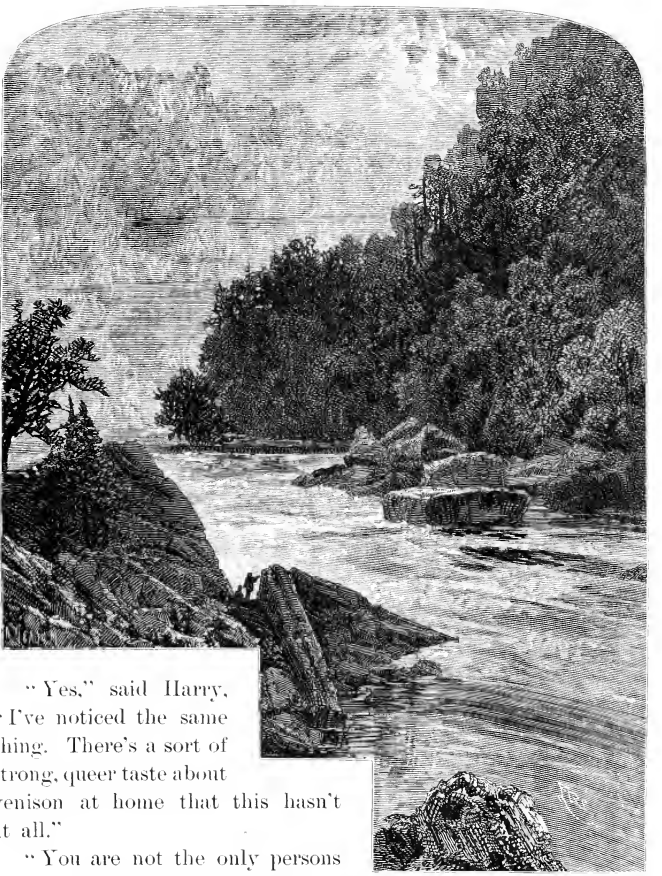
"That's where the refrigerator comes in," replied the trapper. "Put your meat into the well and get the rest of it, while I go up to the cabin for my lock and key to lock it up." As the boys were bringing the last of the venison, the trapper returned, bearing in his hand a white rag the size of a small handkerchief.

"We'll first cut off our dinner," he said, "and then we'll make our meat-safe burglar-proof." Having selected what he wished for immediate use, he fastened the white rag to a bush in such a manner that it hung spread out to its full extent immediately over the well. "There! There's nothing to disturb our meat in this country except wild animals, and as long as that rag waves, the Treasury of the United States isn't more safe from robbers than our refrigerator will be. That white rag is my lock and key, and a safe and sure one it is, too."

"How long will the meat keep there, Mr. Dant?" asked Dick.

"I have kept it there for over three weeks, when the weather was much warmer than now. The outside gets white and a little stringy, it's true, long before, but that I don't use. The inside, though, will be as sweet as a nut for three weeks and more, at any rate. I never tried it longer."

Dinner was next prepared. The first vigor of his appetite appeased, Dick said: "This venison doesn't taste like that we get at home; and then, it's as tender as can be. I have always heard that venison had to be quite ancient before it was fit to eat, but it seems to me this could hardly be better."



BELOW THE BOG CAMP.

"Yes," said Harry, "I've noticed the same thing. There's a sort of strong, queer taste about venison at home that this hasn't at all."

"You are not the only persons I have heard say that. Whether our deer are naturally better than those sent to market, or whether it's because market venison has been run to death with hounds, I can't say; though I suspect that hounding has a good deal to do with it. I don't think any

meat that has been half run and half scared to death is fit to eat."

"Then you don't approve of hunting deer with dogs?"

"Well, no—not in this country, anyway. It may be all right in some region where the conditions are different, but here it's against the law, and a good law it is too, I think. But there's one kind of hunting deer with dogs that I don't see how any man who calls himself a gentleman or a sportsman can try more than once: that is, to put a lot of hounds into the woods near a lake, while the hunters watch the water from ambush. When a deer hears the dogs howl, as they do as soon as they strike a fresh scent, its instinct is to go for water. It enters the lake and tries to put it between itself and the dogs. The hunters wait until the deer is too far from shore to get back before they can reach it, and then chase it in a boat. The poor animal hasn't the ghost of a chance for its life. They don't even shoot at a distance in which it is possible to miss, for the deer, if killed, would sink. They run up alongside in the boat, one man holds the poor thing by the tail, while another blows its brains out, or kills it with a knife or club. I know there are some who call this kind of thing sport, but if they are right, then the butcher who runs a slaughter-house is a sportsman."

"By-the-way, Mr. Dant, you didn't tell us what carried off the boat when it was missing. You seemed sure the rope had been cut, and sure that the boat hadn't been taken by man. Did the rope chafe off against something, so that it looked as if it was cut?"

"No; the rope didn't chafe off. It was cut, fast enough. I found out what did it as soon as I looked at the boat: it was beavers."

"Beavers!" exclaimed Dick. "Are there really live beavers here?"

"Yes; there's one family of six on this stream," replied the trapper.

"Have they houses here, and dams? and have they cut down trees, and all that kind of thing?" asked Dick.

"Yes. Here's as good a chance to study beaver as any place I know of just now. This bog is a very old beaver settlement. I

think at one time they had a dam somewhere down near where we dressed the deer, which kept all these bogs flooded. I can't account for all the dead tamaracks along the stream any other way. They must have grown under about the same conditions we see now; and since they are all of about the same size, they must all have been killed about the same time. A beaver-dam that kept the water steadily up over their roots would do it, and I think has done it. There were traces of an old one down there when I first came into this country."

"Oh, Mr. Dant, I should so like to see a beaver at work! I would a good deal rather do that than shoot another deer, if I had my choice this very minute," said Harry.

"We won't shoot any more deer this trip, Harry," replied the trapper, "unless one tries to stamp on our toes. We've come for moose, and we'll get a moose if we can. But if we do, I am not sure but you'll be sorry for it, because we will have to pack the best part of it way back to the lake. It's against my principles to shoot to waste. This country is just as good to-day for game and fur as it was when I first came into it; and if not the first man in here, I was the first, at any rate, to range it as a steady thing. I've kept it so by being careful never to disturb the game more than I could help, and never killing anything except for actual use.

"As to seeing a beaver at work, I've tried to do it myself lots of times, and have never succeeded, so I don't think your chance for that is very good. Beaver don't cruise about much during the daytime: all their work is done at night. They will do three times more on a dark and rainy night than they will when the moon is bright. I have sometimes thought that they felt safer when it was dark, and so gave all their time to work; but that when they could see distant objects clearly, they fancied that they could be seen as well, and that they then spent a good deal of time which would have been given to work listening and watching for the approach of danger. They are a very timid animal. It's an easy matter to tear a hole in one of their dams on a bright moonlight night, and then hide to see what will happen. I've done it more than once. As soon as the water begins to lower above the dam

they know something is wrong there, and start to see what it is and to mend it. But the very fact that something unusual has happened makes them mighty suspicious, and they discover the watcher, and clear out before they have done the first thing to satisfy his curiosity; at least that's the way they have always treated me. Though a beaver's eyesight is not very keen, its nose and ears are, and I've never been able to get near enough to see by moonlight what was going on without their finding me out. Though I can't promise to show you a beaver at work, and probably won't show you a beaver at all, we can spend the afternoon going over their works, if you like, and I'll tell you what I know about them. You'll get a pretty good idea of them that way."

Nothing more agreeable to the boys could have been suggested, and they were soon on their way up the bog stream in the boat.

"Here we are at the main beaver dam," said the trapper at last. "Jump out, boys, and look till you are tired."

The bog stream was here perhaps a hundred feet wide. A low pile of brushwood extended straight across the stream, from the western bank to a small island distant some twenty feet from the eastern bank. The channel between the island and the eastern bank was closed by another pile of brushwood, extending downstream at quite an angle with the direction of the longer pile.

"Is this thing a beaver dam, Mr. Dant?" exclaimed Harry, in a tone of great disappointment, and with an expression of no little disgust.

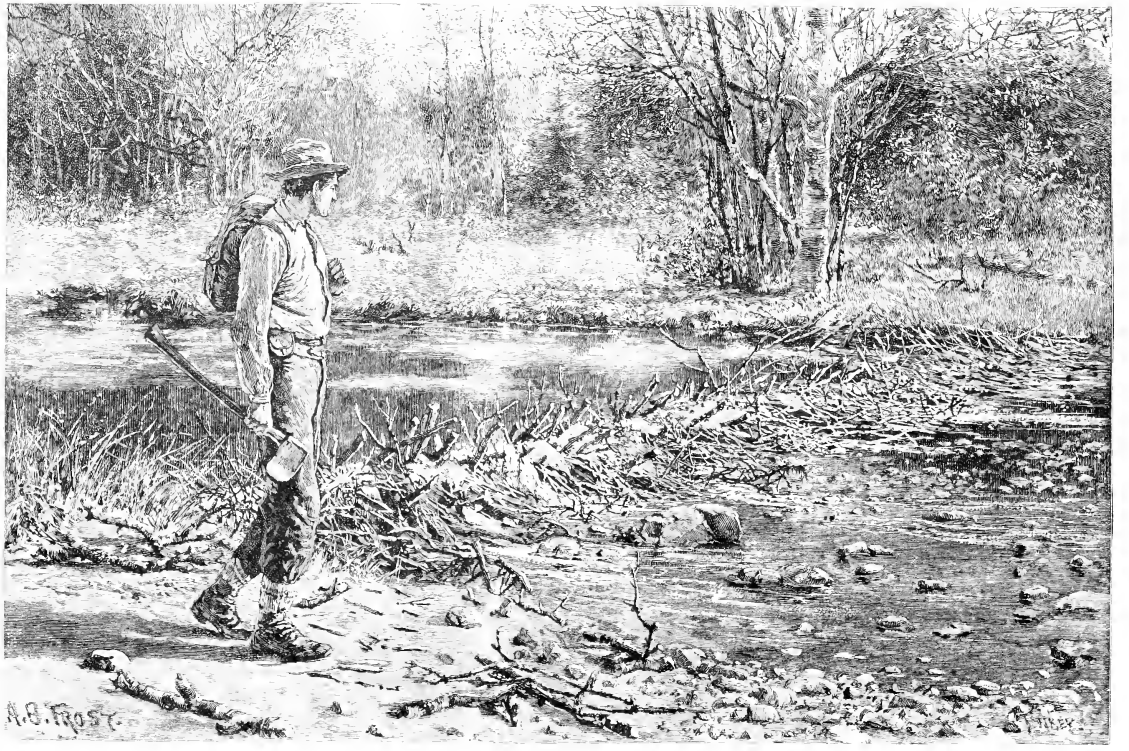
"Yes, that's a beaver dam."

"But it's an old one all gone to pieces," suggested Dick.

"No, it's brand-new—just put in this last summer," replied the trapper.

"But they are not all such shabby-looking things as this, are they?" asked Harry.

"This is a very fair average specimen," answered the trapper. "I don't know that I could take you to one, and I know of a good many, that would give you a fairer idea of them. I've seen bigger and better, but they are not common. There used to be one up at the head of this stream, a quarter of a mile long and nearly seven



A BEAVER DAM.

feet high in the middle, but that was, by all odds, the biggest and best I've ever seen. As I said before, this is a fair specimen. If anything, it's rather above than below the average."

"Why, it's nothing but a long, narrow heap of alder-bushes, piled into the stream sort of higgledy-piggledy, the butts sticking up in the air, and the branch ends under water. The biggest of them isn't much, if any, thicker than my wrist," said Harry.

"Yes, that's the way they always build them up here. In countries where there are no alders they very likely use some other kind of brush; but here alders always line the banks of our streams, and so they always use them, I suppose because no other brush is so handy. You see this dam is built on a hard, gravelly bottom, where the water isn't over four inches deep. They always choose a hard bottom and shallow water. The deepest water I ever knew them to build a dam in was not over two feet, and that was the big dam I spoke of before. We'll look at the place where it was by-and-by. Then, too, they always choose a shallow place close below a deep pool, if they can find it, just as they did here.

"They cut the alder-bushes on the banks in the neighborhood, drag them into the water, and tow or push them down to the site of the dam. There they place them so that the branch ends point up-stream, and pack mud over them to keep them down. As near as I can see, they let the butt ends take care of themselves pretty much, for weighing down the branch ends with mud would make the butt ends stick up in the air more or less, just as you see they do. The upper side is always a solid, water-tight, sloping bank of mud, grass, and small stones, as it is here; while the down-stream face of the dam is almost always—always, unless the dam has been used and kept in repair for a great many years—just such a rough-looking pile of brushwood as you see, all the bushes and poles appearing as though they had been pitched in almost anyway."

"I wouldn't have believed it," said Harry. "Why, I thought they drove stakes, and wove branches in and out among them like basket-work, until they had run two fences across the stream; and that then they packed grass and stuff in between until the space was full, and then brought mud on their tails and plastered over the

whole thing as nice and smooth as a mason could plaster it with a trowel. Why, this thing does not raise the water over twenty inches, or two feet at the outside. And then on top it's nothing but poles and butts of alders sticking up in every direction, so that the escaping water sifts through and between them instead of running over the dam. A farmer's boy clearing a brush-patch would make as good-looking a dam as this if he only piled the bushes he cut down long and narrow, and shovelled a little dirt up on one side."

"I don't know where you city people get your ideas of beaver," replied the trapper, "but if from books, they must be mighty queer books. I never knew one yet to look at a beaver dam or house for the first time without surprise and disappointment. As for driving stakes, beavers can't any more do it than they can fly. They don't carry mud and stuff on their tails. They couldn't if they tried, because, though their tails are shaped a good deal like a trowel, still the upper surface rounds too much. They are too short and thick in the body to load themselves, and even if they got another beaver to load them, such part of the cargo as didn't roll off would be washed away before they had gone twenty feet through the water. They always travel by water when they can, and all the mud they get is from the bottom or right at the bank. As for plastering mud with their tails, I won't say they don't do it, because I have never seen them actually at work, as I told you before; but I don't believe they do it all the same. As far as I have ever been able to see, the principal use they make of their tails is as a prop. A great part of their work is done sitting up, using their fore-paws as we use our hands. When in that position their tails are spread flat on the ground and help to support them. Some think they use their tails as a rudder, and also as a propeller, just as a man sculls a boat with an oar. But if they do, it's only when they are swimming entirely under water, for I've seen them swimming on the surface often enough, and then they always carry their tails straight out behind, not using them at all except perhaps occasionally to steer, and even of that I'm not sure. As for the height to which their dams raise the water, where there is one that raises the water

over two feet, there are fifty that raise it less than that. The big dam I spoke of raised the water nearly, if not quite, seven feet; but then that stands alone among all the beaver dams I ever saw.

"Shall we be moving?"

"Tell us first something more about the big dam before we go; that is, if you are not in a hurry, Mr. Dant."

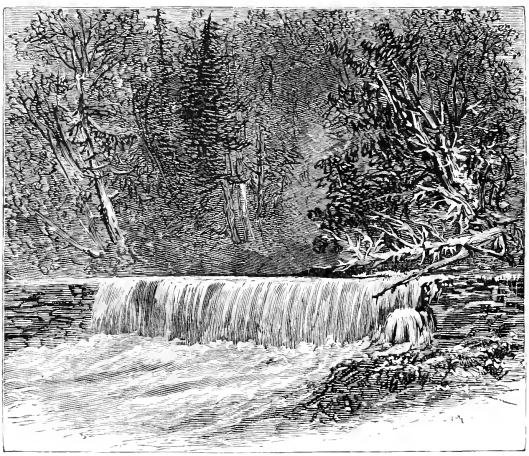
"The afternoon's young yet," replied the trapper, "so we've plenty of time.

"The stream where they built the big dam was, I should say, about thirty feet wide and two feet deep. The banks were of mud, quite straight up and down, and about four feet high. They built a dam which raised the water to the level of the top of the bank. When the water flowed over the banks it of course escaped round the ends of the dam and ran back into the stream. They then extended their dam right and left till it was almost, if not quite, quarter of a mile long. I ought to say that these extensions were nowhere over two feet high, and often not over six inches. The only place where it raised the water seven feet was just the width of the stream, say from twenty-five to thirty feet. The alder poles, of which the high part of the dam was mainly built, were pretty well limbed off and laid parallel with the current, the butts down-stream. These butt ends were laid even enough, so that the lower face of the dam was pretty perpendicular, which gave the dam a more finished appearance than any other I ever saw. Its up-stream face was a sloping bank of mud, grass, and small stones, just like this one, only bigger. As I said before, it was by long odds the finest beaver dam I ever saw. It spoke well for the industry and ambition of the colony that built it, but it didn't strike me as showing much judgment; for a dam thirty feet long, to bar the original stream, would have given them a great deal better pond than they are usually content with."

"Like Harry," said Dick, "I am dreadfully disappointed. I didn't exactly look to see a dam of hewn timber and masonry, but I did expect something very different from this. Then you don't think the beaver is so very intelligent an animal, Mr. Dant?"

"I hardly know how to answer that question. Sometimes I do,

and sometimes I don't. In the big dam I think it's pretty clear they did not foresee the result of their original dam, or they would have been more moderate. Then, again, I remember a family of eight beavers that moved in on a stream about six miles from here. You know beavers live chiefly on the bark of willow, poplar, and white birch trees; mainly on white birch in this country, because it's the most plenty. They don't eat the paper-like bark of the white birch that I use to light fires with, but the inner bark that



THE STONE DAM

lies between that and the wood. Well, there was white birch enough near where they moved in to have supplied them for ten years. They cut every stick of it the first year, nine-tenths of it to clear waste. The next year they had to move elsewhere to find food; that is, what I left of them."

"Then the beaver is really a very stupid animal," said Harry.

"No. I think that's running to the other extreme. You remember, Harry, where we lunched the first day you were with me, where you saw, or rather didn't see, the caribou? Well, on that

same stream, about two miles below, is a place we call the Stone Dam. The river flows for some distance over a flat sheet of rock, polished by the freshets of centuries, and drops perpendicularly about three feet into a deep, dark pool below. It's a great place for big trout, is that pool. At the average height of the stream the water flows over this rock in a sheet about three inches deep. Now, no dam the beavers could possibly build above the fall could begin to make a pond that would compare in depth of water and extent with the natural pool below it; while the quantity of food-wood and the trouble of getting it would be the same in either case. Yet eight or nine years ago, a family of beavers put in a dam forty feet long and two feet high upon this smooth, flat rock, about thirty feet above the edge of the fall. How they ever made it stand where a man could hardly keep his footing is almost as surprising as their stupidity in building it at all; but they did. The fact that it curved some ten feet up-stream partly accounts for this, but not for the fact that they succeeded in making a water-tight joint between their dam and the polished rock.

"Then, again, when beavers live in alder swamps, as they often do, they may build a half-dozen or more short dams from knoll to knoll to make a pond of satisfactory size. Though these knolls may be riddled with holes left by the decay of roots and other causes, though fallen trees and snags may cut the line of their dam at almost every angle, they plug the holes and build round the trees and snags till all leakage is stopped, a thing no man could do without digging an extensive foundation.

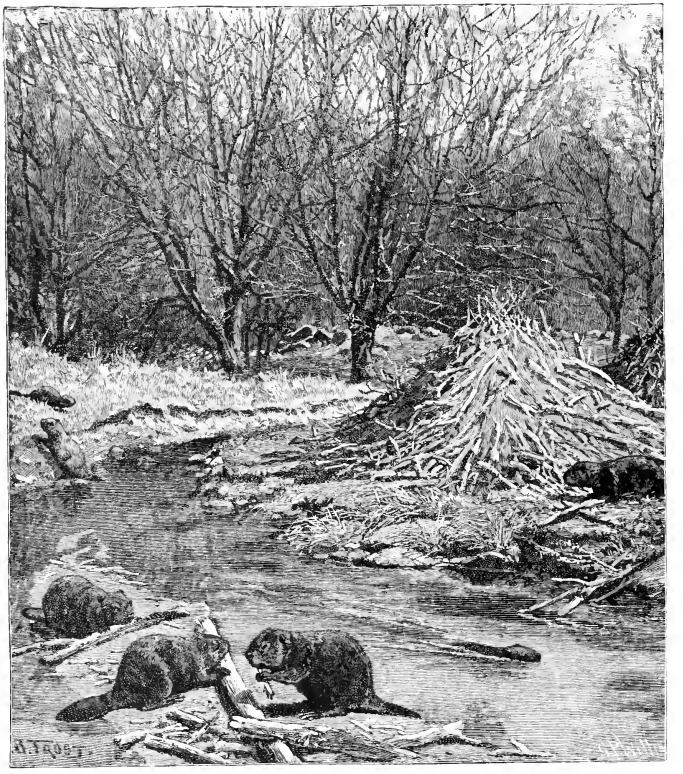
"But come, I think we'd better be moving."

After pulling the boat over the beaver dam, they embarked on the placid pool above and proceeded up-stream. They had gone but a short distance—not over thirty yards—when the trapper headed the boat to the bank and whispered to the boys:

"There's the beaver house. Land as quietly as you can, put your ear down close to the top of it, and then pound on it with your fist and listen."

The boys did so.

"Did you hear anything?"



BEAVER HOUSES.

"Yes," replied Dick. "I heard something moving about below us."

"That was the beavers clearing out. They always leave home when any one calls on them as you did. They have sense enough, anyway, to have more than one place of safety in which to pass the day. Besides their house, they have a number of different holes

where the bank is steep and the water deep close to it. These holes open far enough below the surface so they will not be closed by ice in winter. They ascend gradually for from ten to twenty feet until within a few inches of the surface of the ground, usually under the roots of some tree. There they have a living-room, getting air from the top through an opening protected by the roots. Beavers that live on lakes or deep ponds or streams build no dams, and sometimes build no houses above ground, but live in such holes in the bank altogether. Though we call them 'bank beavers,' they are exactly the same animals as the dam beavers. Here you see they show some sense in adapting themselves to circumstances."

"I don't think much more of their house than I did of their dam," said Harry, as he gazed upon a conical pile of poles about ten feet in diameter and four feet high, situated between the trunks of some small tamarack trees. These poles were well limbed off, from two to ten feet long, the thickest about two inches in diameter. If a farmer had carelessly made a pile of that size and shape of his bean poles, it would not have looked very different.

"A beaver house isn't a four-story brown-stone front," said the trapper, "but the apple that looks best on the outside isn't always the best tasting. If we tore it open you would think better of it. But that would never do, for then they'd all clear out from here to no one could tell where. I have about thirty-five to forty dollars on deposit there, waiting for me to draw it out when the ice begins to be thick and fur is at its very best. If we should disturb the house, we'd break the bank. But I can tell you just how they are built and arranged inside, if you like."

"I should like it very much," said Dick; "And I too," added Harry.

"They choose a place above their dam where the ground is but a few inches higher than the water-level, and where the bank is steep, so that the doors may be in deep water. They seem to have sense enough to know that the entrance must be so far below the surface of the water that the ice will never freeze down to it; for if it did it would lock them up in their houses to starve to death. If

they can't find a place where the water is deep enough close to the bank, they will dig a regular ditch on the bottom in which the water will be deep enough. At the bottom of the bank end of the ditch will be the entrance to the house. The other end will be in deep water. The place having been decided on, they arrange together a number of poles free from limbs, so that the butts rest on the ground in a circle, while the small ends meet in the middle like an Indian wigwam. The way they take advantage of the crooks in the poles, or any other little thing of the kind, to make the inner ends support one another so as to form the roof of their house shows more mechanical common-sense than a good many men have. They pile mud, grass, and short sticks on top of these poles to a thickness of two feet or more, except at the top. A space six or eight inches wide is left there for an air-hole, which is crossed in every direction by sticks and poles, but without any mud.

"Two years ago I opened one where a family of four had lived. The living-room was four and a half feet long, three feet wide, and eighteen inches high. The grass beds of the family could easily be seen, the father's at one end, the mother's on one side, the two children's opposite. In the middle was the dining-room, its floor about three or four inches above the water. Two holes led from it into the water, one steep and crooked, and one straight and more sloping so that they could bring in their food-wood conveniently. These two holes opened under water at different places quite a little distance apart.

"When ice begins to form regularly overnight they begin to lay in their winter stock of food-wood. They fell the trees ashore, cut them up into lengths as big as they can handle, pull, push, and roll them into the water, and float them down to near their house, where they pile them up in deep water. Some think they waterlog the wood in some mysterious way so that it will sink. I'm not very fond of mysteries where any other reasonable explanation can be found. It has always seemed to me that they piled the pieces on top of one another or pushed them under, until the weight of the pile itself was enough to sink it to the bottom. At any rate, these

wood-piles always stick up above the ice; and as that part as well as what is frozen in is lost to them, it seems to me that this apparent waste of labor is really necessary, and has for its object to sink the rest of the wood-pile below the ice-level. A family of four beavers will put in a store of food-wood irregularly circular in shape, ten to twelve feet in diameter and four or five feet high. The sides will

IN AN OLD BEAVER-WORKS.

be pretty well straight up and down, and the wood will be packed together close enough to bear a man's weight. As long as the weather is severe, all the work they do is to go from their house to the wood-pile, cut off a piece, bring it in, eat off the bark, and carry the wood part out again. But let a thaw come, and they will burrow to the surface through four or five feet of snow, and work as

only beavers can work getting in fresh food-wood until another cold snap comes.

"But suppose we go and see where these gentlemen are foraging now."

Ascending the stream still farther, they turned up the branch on the bank of which the trail from the lake ended, and landed at the place from which the boat had been missing at their arrival. As they stood on the bank the trapper said:

"Now you'll understand what carried off our boat. This is the beavers' highway to and from their food-ground. You see the boat is too long to swing round with the wind, and as the wind is down the bog most of the time, it generally lay right across the stream, barring it from side to side. The beavers, passing up and down with their wood, found the way completely blocked by the boat, tried to move it, found it was tied, landed, cut the rope, and pushed it out of the way. When it lodged below and bothered them again, they pushed it down farther, until at last they worked it out into the main stream. There I suppose the wind and current took it down to the dam.

"You look, Harry, as if you thought this rather a tough story to swallow, but it's true all the same. I only judge that the beavers are working now up this stream, rather than some of the other branches, from the fact that the boat was carried away, and you'll see that we'll find it so. There, look at those marks on the boat: they are the marks of beaver teeth. There's no mistaking them when you've once seen them, as you yourself will say before we come back."

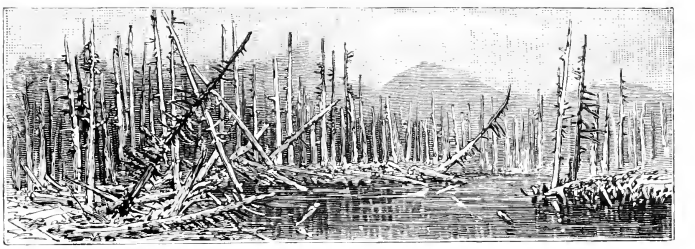
"That doesn't look very stupid to me, Mr. Dant," said Dick. "To study out why they couldn't move the boat, to find that it was held by something on land and not in the water, and then to go ashore and fasten on the rope as the cause and cut that, looks to me a good deal like reason. A man couldn't have done better, except he might have untied the rope instead of cutting it."

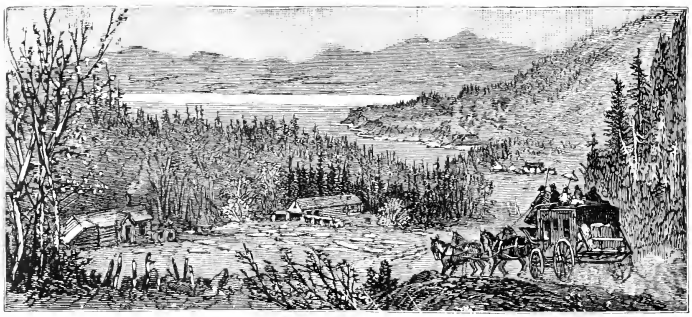
"That's why beavers are such a puzzle," replied the trapper. "First, they'll do the stupidest things, like building that big dam; or working themselves nearly to death, only to bring famine on

them; or put in a dam where it is of no earthly use. Then you'll think they haven't any more sense than a rabbit. But when you stop to consider, you'll find that the best engineer couldn't have planned the dam better, or even as well, for that place, or you'll run against something of this kind. Then you begin to think they have as much sense as a man. If they could only be watched when at work, so as to learn the way they go at it, it would be different; but the trouble about that is, that as long as you watch they won't work, as I told you before.

"How they do their work—whether one plans and bosses the job, and the others do as they are told, or whether each works on his own hook guided by instinct alone—there may be those who know, but I've never seen them, and I've been among beaver-works and beaver-trappers a good many years. I've seen plenty who'd talk as if the king of the beavers had told them all about it, but when you've got right down to the foundation it would all turn out to be nothing but guesswork.

"Now let's go and see if we can find where they are working."





CHAPTER XII.

Beavers' Work.—Beavers' Teeth.—How Beavers Fell Trees.—Beaver Canals.—The Personal Appearance of the Beaver.—Habits of the Beaver.—A Chance Encounter.—The Trapper's Fruit-tree.—Trapping Beavers.—Setting Beaver-traps.—The Front-leg Set.—The Hind-leg Set.—Midwinter Trapping.

THE trapper led the way up along the stream, crossed where he did when in search of the missing boat, and then kept on up the other bank.

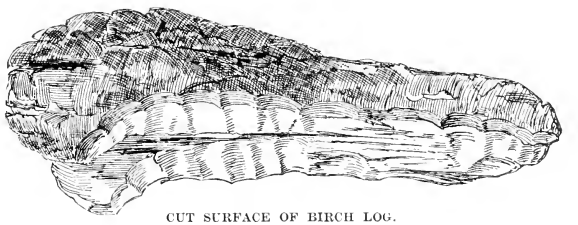
"When I saw you go over after the boat yesterday," said Dick, "I supposed it was on a pile of drift-wood. I now see it's another beaver dam."

"Yes," replied the trapper, "it's an old dam repaired this year to back up the water above, so that the beavers can sluice their wood easier. That's the way they do it. Sometimes one family will build half a dozen dams, one above the others on a small stream, each one backing the water up to the foot of the one above it. You see that this dam is built just like the other, though it is so much shorter. But here we are. I thought we wouldn't have

to go far. What do you think of this tree for a specimen of beavers' work?"

"You don't mean to say beavers cut down this tree, Mr. Dant?" said Dick. "Why, it's fifteen or sixteen inches in diameter, and it's a hard-wood tree, too."

"Yes, it's a white birch tree, and the beavers felled it just as you see it. Not only this, but here are the chips left from their work. No tree is too big for them to fell if they wish to. Let's confine our attention now to this stump. You see it is cut off twenty inches or so above the ground, and has been gnawed in a wide groove all the way around the trunk until the tree has fallen, leaving that part which had not been cut through slivered and broken. Notice, too, that the cut end of the stump has the shape



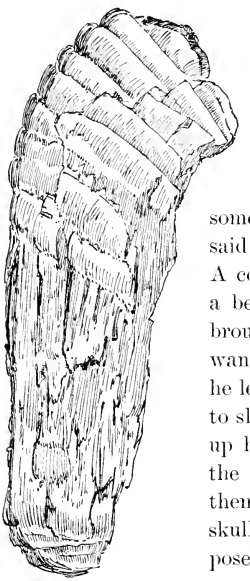
CUT SURFACE OF BIRCH LOG.

of a cone nearly as high as the tree is thick. Now look at the cut surface. You see it is scored all over with marks, as though it had been cut by two nearly flat gouges about a quarter of an inch wide held side by side. Those are the marks of the beavers' teeth, and, as I told you, once seen can hardly be mistaken for anything else afterwards. You see that some of these marks are a little narrower than others. That means that two different animals worked on the tree. By looking over this ground for half an hour or so, I could tell just how many beavers make up this family, if I didn't already know. Now you can examine the chips."

Each boy picked up a handful from the quantities which lay around the stump, and after studying them some time, Harry said:

"Well, I declare I would hardly have believed it possible. I

supposed beavers gnawed as rats gnaw, and that their chips were coarse sawdust like that made by rats. But here's a chip two inches and a half long, an inch wide, and a quarter of an inch thick, and there are any quantity more which are nearly, if not quite, as large. The smallest are at least an inch square and an eighth of an inch thick. They must have uncommon teeth and lots of muscle to drive them, to do such work and in such hard wood too."



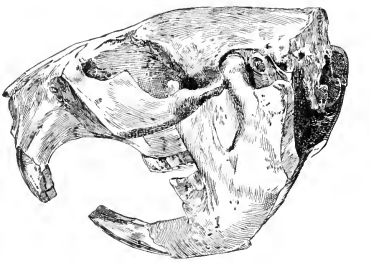
CHIP CUT BY BEAVER (NATURAL SIZE).

"I expected one of you would say something of that kind about beavers' teeth," said the trapper, "because everybody does. A couple of months ago I found the skull of a beaver I had trapped the year before, and brought it to camp for a gentleman who wanted to take it home. He forgot it when he left. So I thought it might be a good idea to slip the skull in my pocket when we started up here, so that you could see the marks of the beavers' teeth and the teeth that made them at the same time. It's a very good skull for our purpose, because it has been exposed to the weather until the cutting teeth are quite loose, so that they can be pulled out and put back without any trouble. See how strong and thick the bones of the jaws are.

"The teeth of a beaver are built on what I call strictly scientific principles. The best tools of the best tool-maker require the grindstone once in a while when they become dull from use. But the more a beaver's teeth are used the sharper they become. You see that almost all of the tooth is made up of comparatively soft bone, not harder than a deer's horn. But the outside surface of the tooth consists of a scale not thicker than your thumb nail, and as hard as glass. Of course the softer body of the tooth wears with use much more than the hard enamel. The end of the tooth, therefore, takes

a bevel like a chisel, with a thin, slightly projecting cutting edge as sharp as any carpenter's tool when just off an oil-stone."

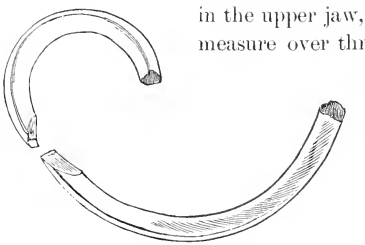
"Why, these beavers' teeth are not very sharp, Mr. Dant," said Dick.



BEAVER'S SKULL.

"That's because the edges were broken off by the beaver on the trap when it was caught. They always do that if they are not drowned very soon after they are nipped. But before that beaver began on the cold steel, you may rely on it that his teeth had a really first-class edge. Then notice, too, how the softer tough bone slopes up to the cutting edge, so as to back it up and give it strength.

"Now, you see that about an inch of the upper cutting teeth is outside the skull. Now I'll pull them out of their sockets. You see that each tooth makes about half of a circle, so that if the ends of a right and a left tooth are put together, a complete circle like a thin ivory napkin-ring is formed. You see, too, that besides the inch outside a length of tooth is buried in the socket in the upper jaw, which around the curve would measure over three inches. Now I'll put them back, and pull out the lower cutting teeth. You notice that they project a little more beyond the bone, have a very much flatter curve, and are embedded in the jaw at least five inches. There is another curious thing to be noticed about these teeth. You see the root is hollow. I've been told the roots of elephants' tusks are the same, and that all teeth made that way keep growing all



BEAVER TEETH (HALF-SIZE).

the time. At any rate, beavers' cutting teeth do. A beaver that breaks off one of its teeth, and does not at the same time break off the opposing tooth, is in a bad way. The opposing tooth is no longer worn by use, but keeps getting longer and longer, until after a while, if the broken tooth doesn't hurry up, the beaver can't shut his mouth, and so starves to death."

"With such teeth, I don't see but beavers have to work, whether they want to or not, so as to keep their teeth worn down to the proper length," said Dick.

"Just so," replied the trapper; "at least, that's the way I explain the enormous amount of apparently useless gnawing they do. The trunk of the tree which belonged to the big stump we have been looking at is an example. Here it lies just where it fell. You see they have eaten the bark down to the wood, from the top and sides, where it could be got at conveniently, but have left it underneath. They have also cut and carried away all the branches of three inches or less in diameter. All this is as we should expect. But you notice they have gnawed into the tree trunk itself in a number of places, sometimes cutting it nearly half through. Why they have done this, unless to wear their teeth, beats me. They couldn't carry off the billets, even if they had cut them off entirely. But if we look a little farther we may find a better example—yes, here's just what I was looking for. Cases of this kind will be found through every beaver-works."

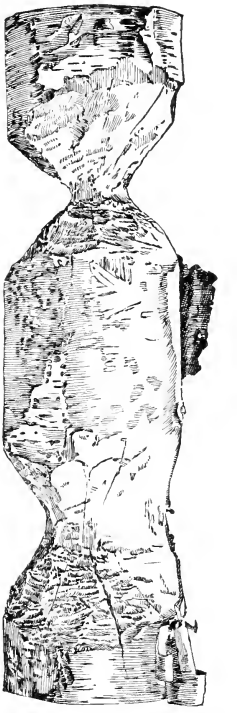
The trapper pointed to a prostrate tree trunk some twenty feet long, about eight or nine inches in diameter at the larger, and six inches at the smaller end. It had been cut at intervals of eight or ten inches, almost throughout its length. In some places it had been gnawed half through, in some a third, while at others nothing but a small core of wood not over an inch and a half in diameter held the parts together; but at no place had the separation been completed. The whole trunk looked almost like a quantity of large oblong beads strung upon a pole. The work was some months old, and had evidently been abandoned from choice and not from necessity.

"When beavers fell a tree so that it falls on land," continued

the trapper, "they seldom remove any part of it over three inches in diameter; but when they fell a tree so that it falls into the water, they will float pieces as large as six inches thick, and as long as they can handle, down to their wood-pile."

"I've read," said Dick, "that if a tree grows near enough to the bank, they always cut it so that it falls into the water; and that they showed just as much skill in it as any trained lumberman could."

"Yes, I've heard that before," replied the trapper. "But look at that tree, and that, and that. Any man who could earn his tea and beans in a lumber-camp could have felled any one of those trees into the water. But you see all of them have fallen on the bank, where, it is perfectly safe to say, the beavers didn't want them. Some people are mighty queer about this sort of thing. They are so fond of wonders that they seem blind to any simple explanation though it lies directly under their noses. They see only the few chance cases that support their notions, while they lose sight of the hundreds of ordinary cases which would teach them better."



BIRCH LOG CUT BY BEAVER.

"I had an idea that beavers worked only close around their houses and dams," said Dick; "but this must be over a quarter of a mile at least from their house. How is this, Mr. Dant?"

"If they have water communication they will range up and down the stream for quite a distance, a mile or more. But they don't like to go far from water. They are a timid, defenceless animal, and they know the water is their only place of safety. As far as my experience goes, it is very rare for them to go back in the

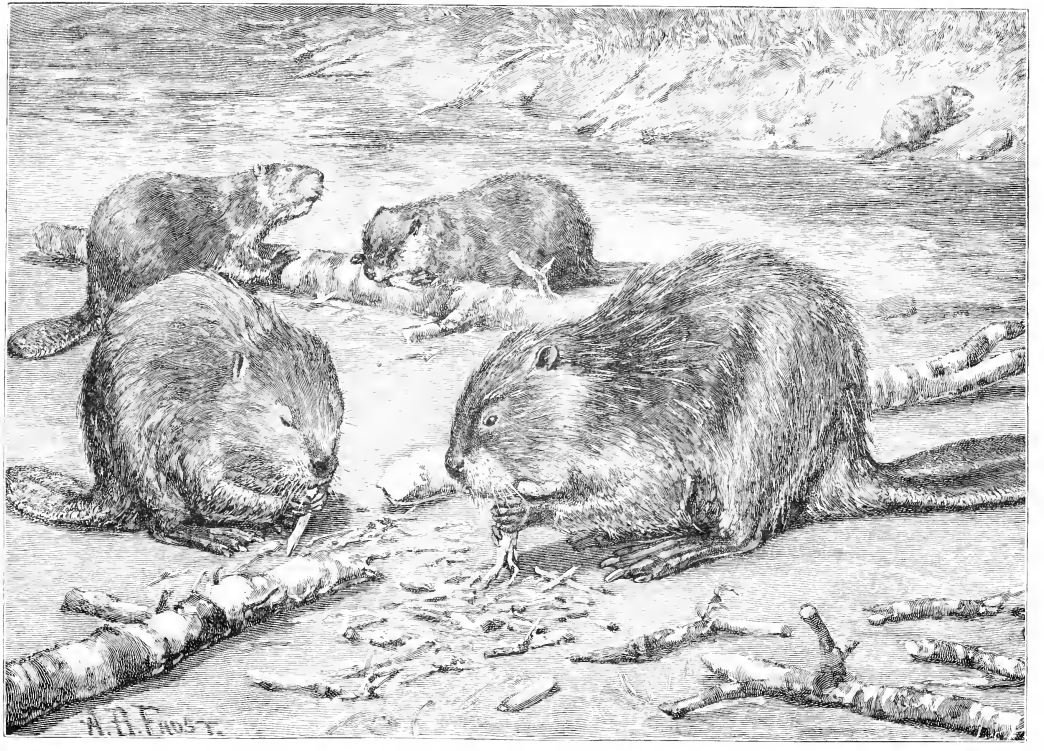
woods as much as ten rods from the bank, and then only for some extra choice food-wood. Of course, when they have fed out a country or are frightened out of it, then they travel considerable distances overland to other waters. Until the winter fairly sets in it's a mighty easy thing to scare them so as to set them off on their travels. If we hauled that boat over their dam half a dozen times a day for a week or two, even as late in the season as it now is, they'd be almost sure to clear out. That's why I never let you help me pull it over, because you might be less careful not to injure the dam."

"Is there anything else that beavers do that we haven't seen?" asked Harry.

"Yes, there is one more thing, as wonderful as any, in my judgment. Where there are two pieces of water close together but without natural communication, or where a stream makes a big loop with a narrow neck, if the ground is level they will sometimes dig a regular canal across. These canals are occasionally as much as fifteen or twenty rods long, three feet wide, and carry as much as two feet of water. I am sorry there are none around here to show you; but then you wouldn't see much—nothing but a straight ditch with perpendicular sides. The wonderful thing about it is the tremendous lot of work required, for every bit of the stuff they dig out has to be carried ashore between their fore-paws and their chins."

"You haven't told us what a beaver looks like," said Dick.

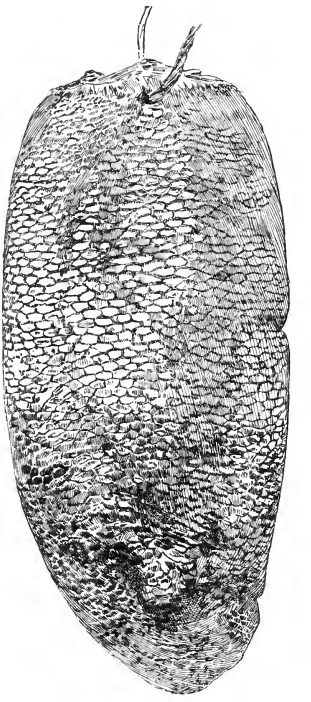
"That's sort of queer, too," said the trapper. "I knew it so well myself that it never entered my head that you might not have seen one. A beaver is a short, chunky sort of an animal, about two feet long in the body, or a little more. A good big one will weigh sixty pounds. They are shaped very much like a musk-rat, only, of course, ever so much larger. The hind-legs are strong, with large paws webbed to the toes, like a duck's foot. The front-paws are very small, considering the size of the animal, and are so set on the body that the palms of the hands naturally turn towards each other. The tail is the most curious part. A big one is a foot long, five inches wide, an inch thick where it joins the body, about half



BEAVERS AT WORK.

an inch thick in the middle, and perhaps an eighth of an inch thick around the edge. It is shaped like a round-ended trowel, a little the widest across the middle. It is coal black, and covered with what look like scales, but are really lumps on the skin.

"You know the color of its fur well enough, I suppose, now it's fashionable. You look a little surprised to hear a man living in the backwoods talk about what is fashionable; but we find it out in furs mighty quick, because we feel it in the prices we get. I used to get five dollars apiece for mink-skins, before seal fur came in. Now I get only a dollar and a quarter for the best. Beaver-skins used always to be sold by the pound, weighed just as they were stretched and dried. Now they are sometimes sold by the single skin. When dried they weigh from one and a half to two pounds each, and used to bring about two dollars and a half a pound. Lately we have been getting from four dollars and a half to five dollars a pound, so I know they are fashionable."



BEAVER'S TAIL.

"You said beavers work only at night, didn't you, Mr. Dant?"

"Yes, and the darker and rainier the night the better they like it. In the summer and early fall they do little work except to keep their dams in repair. Then they sleep all day, and cruise the water at night, living from hand to mouth. Often you'll find in the morning on some sand-bar a hundred or more little willow sticks about the size of a lead-pencil, all freshly peeled. They are the leavings

from some beaver's supper. But when the cold weather comes, then they make up for lost time, repairing their houses and putting in their winter stock of food-wood. If you kept track of what they were doing then, you'd think there was a good deal in the expression 'to work like a beaver.' But even then the work is all done at night. I never saw a beaver, that wasn't in a trap, ashore in the daytime but once. It was in November a year ago. I was at a pond over the boundary about two miles from here; quite a good-sized pond—between a quarter and half a mile long. The beavers had put a dam across the outlet that raised the water two feet in the pond, and flowed it back up the inlet three-quarters of a mile. I was looking over things to see where to put my traps, when I heard something moving up in the woods. When I hear anything moving in the woods I want to know what it is. So I sneaked up as quietly as I could, and there I saw a beaver about forty yards from the water. I should hardly have been more astonished if I had seen my great-grandfather's ghost. It found me out as quick as I found it, and rose up on its hind-legs, like a squirrel, to look at me. One look was enough to satisfy the little curiosity it had. It dropped on all fours and began to shamble for the water the best it knew. I wouldn't have believed that an animal half as broad as it was long, and with such little bits of fore-legs, could get over the ground so. I had the longest legs, but it had the most of 'em, and it used them, too, with industry. A ten-dollar prize for a forty-yard run is worth trying for, and the way I climbed through the windfalls was bad for clothes. As usual when trapping, I had nothing but my axe with me, so I had to get within arm's-length or lose it. It gave me all I wanted to do, but I came up with it, at last, before it could reach the water. When it saw that it was no use, it didn't show fight at all, but just stopped and hunched itself together waiting for what was to come. I really pitied it after I had knocked it on the head, though it was a much less cruel death than they generally die."

"How do you trap beavers, Mr. Dant?" asked Dick.

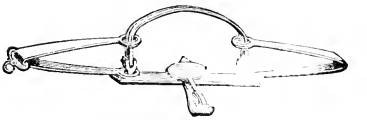
"I don't like to take a beaver now, because the fur isn't quite prime yet. It would look well enough to you, perhaps, but the

minute the dealer saw that the inside of the dried skin was bluish instead of white, he'd know that that fur was taken too early, and cut the price down. Still, I can show you how it is done all the same.

"Would you rather wait here, or come with me to see one of my fruit-trees? I have quite a lot of them scattered through these woods."

The boys preferred to go with him. He led them back the way they came, and then off a short distance into the woods. There stood a small tree, upon which hung some fifty or more steel traps of all sizes.

"Though the chance of any one getting in here from the Canadian settlements is very slim, still it's possible. Now, though many of the French Canadians—'Pea-soupers' we call them—are all right, still some of them are not such persons as I care to expose to much temptation. So I don't keep my traps in camp, where they would find them if they did chance in here, but hidden in this way. This is the kind of a trap we use for beavers. Now let's go back."



BEAVER TRAP.

So saying, the trapper selected a trap provided with two powerful springs, the jaws of which were seven or eight inches long. Three feet of stout chain, ending in a two-inch iron ring, was secured to one of the springs. As they returned, he said:

"All trapping rests on two great principles—like all principles, simple in themselves, but not always so easy to apply. If you are walking in a city street and find a load of coal or wood dumped on the sidewalk in your way, you get by it in the easiest manner, as a matter of course. If you go over it, you do it where it is lowest and narrowest, not where it is highest and widest. If it is high and wide everywhere, you go around, but keep close to it, so as not to go more out of your way than is necessary. It's just so with all animals. When they are out on their rambles, unless turned aside by some special object, such as suspicion or a chance

for food, they select the easiest travelling. This is the first great principle.

"The second great principle is this: All timid wild animals prefer a known way to one they have not tried. Scare a deer, for instance, on the bog, or on the bank of the stream, so that it has to cross the bog to gain cover. It will take the track it came in by every time, if it isn't cut off from it, though it may be twice as far to the woods that way as it would be in a straight line. It's just so with a beaver. The first time one of them comes up this stream hunting for food-wood, it will land with the greatest caution. If it gets back all right, every beaver that comes up afterwards to forage there will land in the same place and no other. They know the water is their place of safety, and the land their place of danger. They will go on to that place of danger only by the path they have proved to be safe. They will return to the water almost anywhere where it is convenient, because that is going from a place of danger to one of safety. But landing will always be done in that one place as long as they are feeding in that vicinity.

"Now let us walk up the stream while you watch the banks, and try if you can see such a place."

They had gone but a short distance before Harry called out, "There it is, right over there!" and Dick said, "Yes, and there's another!"

"Both wrong," replied the trapper. "Don't you see that the grass and twigs point towards the water? They point in the direction of travel. Those places are where they returned to the water. But you've learned your lesson. The landing-place is below, so turn back and I'll show it to you."

They found it a short distance down-stream—a well-worn path, almost a foot wide, leading directly up over the bank from the water.

"That's the place to set a trap," said the trapper. "You'll notice that those landing-places are always pretty near deep water. Here there is a little shelf of mud, and then it suddenly breaks off deep. In other places the slope will be more gradual, but deep water is always close by. Upon whether the deep water

is nearer or farther off depends whether we set for a fore or a hind leg."

"You don't mean to say, Mr. Dant, that you decide beforehand which leg you will take them by?"

"Yes; that's just what I do mean to say. We not only decide whether it's to be a fore-leg or a hind-leg, but also upon which side the fore or hind leg is to be. It doesn't do to make any mistake about that. If the shallow water is narrow and the deep water very near, then the trap should be set for a fore-leg. If the slope of the bottom is more gradual, then it must be a hind-leg set. The hind-leg set has the disadvantage that after the beaver finds out that it's caught it takes to the bank, and may be found and eaten by wild animals, so that the skin is spoiled. But it has the advantage that an animal so taken seldom 'foots;' while the fore-leg set has the advantage that if everything works all right, the animal is promptly drowned and is safe under water, but if things go wrong the animal is very apt to foot."

"By 'foot' I suppose you mean they bite off the foot by which they are caught above the trap," said Dick. "I've heard of that."

"I've heard of it too," replied the trapper, "but I have never seen it, and what's more, I don't believe in it. Carnivorous animals, such as the bear, lynx, otter, fisher, and sable, will sometimes gnaw off that portion of the foot which is below the jaws of the trap, where the pressure has killed all sensation, and then wrench out the stump and escape; but I've yet to see a case where they bit off the leg above the jaws of the trap, where the leg was still alive. Vegetable-feeding animals, like the beaver and musk-rat, wrench and twist on the trap until they first break the bone, and then actually pull the leg out by the roots, leaving strings of sinew and small muscle hanging above the jaws of the trap; in the case of the beaver, as much as six inches long. I don't know how it is with other trappers, but besides the loss of the fur, I always feel ashamed of myself when an animal foots in one of my traps, for I ought to have so set it that they couldn't get a solid pull on it. Still, sometimes in their struggles they will hook the trap on to something that fastens it up solid, and then, particularly if it happens soon after they are caught,

they are likely to foot. Trapping is an awful cruel business, there is no denying that, but I doubt if footing hurts them so very much; for if it hurt them anything like what it would hurt us, they couldn't stand it to pull and wrench on a broken leg the way they must do to pull it out by the roots. I think the squeeze of the trap numbs them."

"Will you show us how you set the trap now, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry.

"No. Not now. I would have to get into the water to do it, and that is hardly worth while when I can show you just as well when we are in the boat."

On arriving at the smaller beaver dam Dick said, "Why, isn't that a beaver path over this dam, Mr. Dant?"

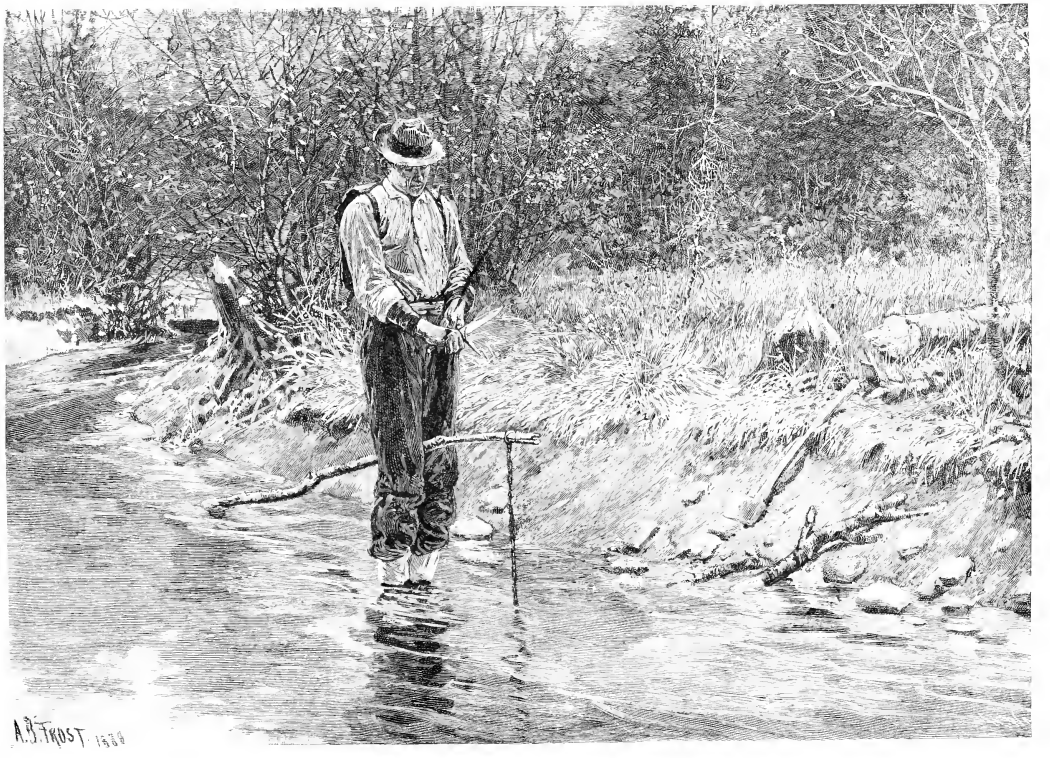
"Yes. You'll always see that on every live beaver dam. We call a 'live beaver dam' one that is actually in use by beavers, to distinguish it from one that has been abandoned. On the principle I told you before, they always cross their dams at the same place."

"Then that must be a first-rate place to put a trap," said Harry.

"It's a first-rate place for a man who doesn't know his business, but one of the last places a trapper would select. Whether it goes to prove that all beaver-work is done under the direction of one boss beaver or not, I won't say. But this is a sure thing: Unless the winter is so far advanced that the beavers are tied down to their homes and pile of food-wood, if the first one trapped out of a family is not the head of the family, the rest of them will clear out under his leadership. If a trap is to be put in at such a place on a beaver dam as this, it is set on the upper side, so that the beaver may have a good chance to swing off into deep water and drown itself. If it does happen to take the boss first, it's all right and there is a chance for another one; but if it doesn't get that one, as is most likely, then that's the end of trapping in that beaver-works."

"I don't see but what that objection would apply to setting traps at the entrances to their houses," said Dick.

"You're quite right, it does. That's another bungler's trick. They drive rows of stakes at the entrances to the houses so that the



SETTING A BEAVER-TRAP

beavers can get in only between the stakes. Then they put a trap at each entrance. But that's only stupid, and he who traps that way gets paid for it. Some fellows—butchers, I call them—get a lot of stakes, stake all the holes they can find, so as to shut the beavers in, and then break open their houses and kill them. That of course wipes that family out altogether, leaving not one to keep up the stock. A good trapper tries to spare all except the full-grown."

"If you don't set traps at the dam or at their houses, where you know they are," said Harry, "I don't see how you can tell where to set them; for from what you said before I suppose you don't use bait."

"I manage it this way: You see, a beaver is in one way an unfortunate animal. Like a country constable, it can't live without sticking up notices that it is around, nor without at the same time describing itself in the notices. I mean that they have to cut to live, and that where fresh cuttings are found, the beavers that made them must be near. Then the teeth-marks of no two beavers in a family are exactly alike. The differences may be small, so small that perhaps you couldn't see them even if I pointed them out. But we woodsmen notice little things. It's as much a habit with us as smoking is with some people. Almost without thinking, and as a matter of course, whenever we are in the woods our eyes are open to the signs of forest life. We could hardly pass them by without notice if we tried. So before the trapping season opens I have located every family of beavers in what I call my country, and know just how many animals make up each family.

"In November, when beaver-trapping time comes, and I propose to make the acquaintance of a beaver family, I first find out where they are working at that time. I then examine their teeth-marks with care. As I said before, the boss beaver must be the first to be taken, or the family will leave. My first object is to locate him. Being larger and stronger than the others, he is generally more enterprising and ranges farther from home. I find where he is in the habit of working at last, perhaps half a mile or more from the house. Not a trap do I set until that is done. Probably I have found out at the same time where he leaves the water for

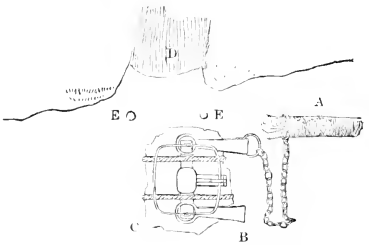
the bank. If not, that takes but a little while when I know where he is working."

While the trapper had been talking they had regained the boat, and had run down the stream to the camp boat-landing. Here he landed, told the boys to remain in the boat, was gone a few moments, and returned with a dry peeled spruce pole about two inches thick and eight feet long, his axe, two stakes, and a flat stone. Both of these stakes had been cut from a bush just below where a stout branch grew. About four inches of this branch had been left on the stakes, which were otherwise trimmed clean. Both stakes were so made that when driven into the ground this short branch would project outward and downward from the top of the stake, just as the barb projects from a fish-hook. Taking his place in the boat, the trapper continued his explanation.

"We call this pole a tally-pole. You see its big end is split. If I slip the ring of the trap-chain over the split end of the pole and drive in a wedge, the trap-chain and trap will be secured to the pole. That's the first thing to do before setting a beaver-trap. The tally-pole must be of dry wood; if green the beaver would cut it off and walk away with the trap, if the pole was three times as thick as this one. Dry wood they won't touch for some reason. Here is a good place for a front-leg set. You see there is a narrow shelf of shallow water with deep water close to it, just as there was where we saw the beaver path above. We will take this musk-rat path for the beaver path, and play that a boss beaver worth a good ten-dollar bill is in the habit of leaving the water here for his nightly ramble ashore. Such being the case, we'll stop here and make a surprise-party for him. I first tie the trap to this flat stone, choosing one for the purpose heavy enough, so that if a beaver once goes below the surface of the water with the trap and stone hitched to him, he's going to stay there. I next fasten the trap to the tally-pole. I then dig a hole with my hands in the bottom under water deep enough to take in the stone, so that when set the trap will lie about four inches below the surface of the water and level with the bottom. This water is not what you would call really warm and comfortable; but when the ice begins to make over the still places in November,

it sometimes makes my hands pain like the toothache when setting traps. I have to do it, though, just as if I liked it.

"You see I haven't set the trap opposite the middle of the path, but off to one side. The beaver is a wide animal, and if the trap was put opposite the middle of the path, if sprung at all, it would be by the beaver's body. Then as the jaws closed they would only throw the beaver up in the air, and, beyond pinching it some and scaring it almost to death, do no good. The side of the path chosen decides whether the beaver will be taken by the right or left leg. The depth of water over the trap determines whether it is to be a hind or fore leg. For the same reason that we don't set the trap opposite the middle of the path, we set the jaws so that they lie lengthwise of the beaver's body when it is over the trap, and not crosswise. We then set the trap, sink it into place on the bottom, move the tally-pole in parallel with the bank, and hold it there under water on the bottom by pushing down the stakes so that the projecting branches will hook over it. The idea is only to keep the tally-pole sunk until a beaver pulls on it; then it should come loose and follow the trap. Now comes in the second great principle—that animals always take the easiest road. I pick from the bottom a couple of old waterlogged sticks, just such as a beaver meets under water all the time, and consequently will see without suspicion. These I stick into the bottom between the trap and where the path leaves the water, so that they stand upright with the tops a little under water, one opposite each side of the path. To land where it wants to land, a beaver must either pass between these sticks—that is, move in the most favorable way for the trap to nip it—or it must squirm around them. It is bound to land at its usual place. My way is conven-



GROUND-PLAN OF BEAVER-TRAP.

A, tally-pole; B, trap; C, stone; D, beaver path; E, guiding sticks.

ient and open; any other way is obstructed and difficult. It takes the easiest way—my way, and, as is often the case when pleasure and convenience only are considered, it soon wishes it hadn't.

"The whole thing works in this way: Along comes the beaver, swimming with its fore-legs doubled back against its body, for a ramble on shore. It approaches its usual landing-place; the sticks guide it over the trap, its breast touches the bank; down goes its leg right into the trap, which closes on it like a flash. The beaver seeks safety where it has always found it before—in deep water, taking trap, stone, and tally-pole with it. There the stone sinks and anchors it, while the free end of the tally-pole, floating above, buoys the place where rest its mortal remains."

The trapper then proceeded to show the boys how to set a trap to take a beaver by the hind-leg. In this case no stone was used. The trap was placed on the bottom under about fourteen inches of water. The free end of the tally-pole was made fast by a thong to a stake driven well into the bottom, so that the top of the stake and the fastening were below the surface. The up-stream end of the tally-pole, to which the trap-chain was fastened, was kept below the surface as before. Otherwise the arrangements were the same.

"When a beaver is taken by this set," said the trapper, "its first jump clears the trap end of the tally-pole. After that it can swing around the tied end of the tally-pole as it chooses. The chain end being up-stream and the fastened end down-stream, the current and its own efforts swing the beaver out into deep water. There the trap may be heavy enough to drown it. This is always the case if the alders grow so thick on the bank that the beaver can't get ashore, hampered as it is with the trap and tally-pole; but if it is not drowned it goes ashore after a while. Often they will mow down every bush which the length of the tally-pole and chain will let them reach. Almost always they will try their teeth on the trap, in which the trap comes off first best. There we find them on the bank. They don't show any fight, only hunch themselves together and keep very still, as if they hoped to escape unseen.

Then we give them a whack on the head with a club enough to stun them—not very hard, or the blood will settle under the skin where they are struck and damage it. Then we take off the trap, and stand on their body with both feet if the ground will permit it. The blow with the club stuns them, and with the weight of a man on their heart and lungs they can't get breath to come to again, so they are dead in a few minutes."

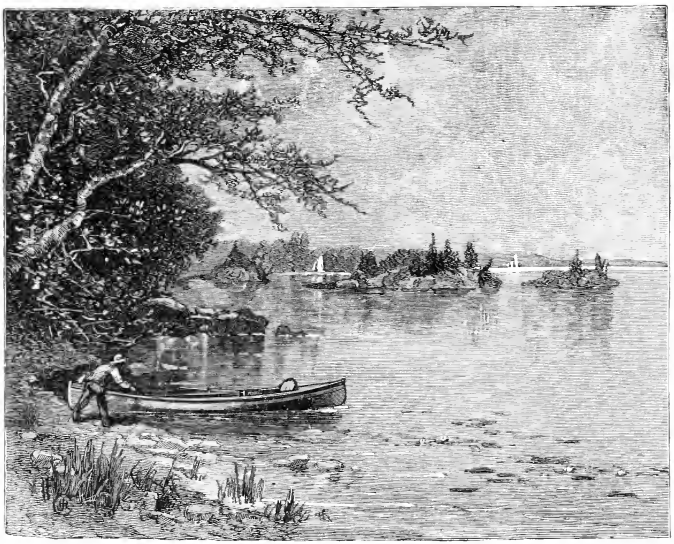
"Then, when the streams and ponds are frozen solid you have to stop trapping beavers?" said Dick.

"Oh no," replied the trapper; "but we follow a different plan then. I of course have kept track of what they have been doing, and know where their house and food-wood pile is. I go off in the woods and cut just the very nicest piece of white birch or poplar I can find. It must be long enough so one end will reach the bottom of the pool in which their wood-pile is, while the other end is well above the ice. I choose a piece as thick as I can well lug, when of the length required. I also get an armful of fir-boughs. Then I cut a hole through the ice near their wood-pile, and stand my stick of bait-wood upright in it so that one end is embedded in the bottom, while the other end is up above the ice. I next set my trap and lower it through the water by the tally-pole, until it rests on the bottom about eighteen inches from my bait-stick. I then cover the hole with fir-boughs to exclude snow and wind, so that the ice, which almost immediately begins to form, will freeze perfectly clear. In a short time both bait-stick and tally-pole are firmly frozen in. Lastly, I heap snow over the fir-boughs until it is as dark over the hole as it is anywhere else.

"The arrangement works this way: A beaver comes to the wood-pile for food. They soon notice my fresh piece. Their wood is waterlogged and sour. My fresh piece, compared to it, is as beef-steak to salt pork. The beaver rises on his hind-legs to cut it off as high up as he can reach, and while so doing works in a circle round the stick. It is sure to step on the trap sooner or later, generally sooner, which closes on it at once. As the trap holds the beaver, the chain holds the trap, the tally-pole holds the chain, and the ice holds the tally-pole, the beaver is soon drowned. On my

next round I take off the snow, lift the fir-boughs from over where the hole has been, and look down through the clear ice as though it was a pane of glass. If I see I have a beaver, I recut the hole, haul it out, and reset for another.

"There! I think that will do about beavers. Let's go back to camp and get supper."



CHAPTER XIII.

Moose-calling Proposed and Abandoned.—They Try Jack-hunting.—An Unfortunate Encounter.—"Good gracious! What did you do that for?"

SUPPER having been eaten with that keen relish which hunger alone can give, and everything made ready for the night, the trapper left the boys to their own devices and vanished into the outer darkness. After an absence of some fifteen minutes he returned and said:

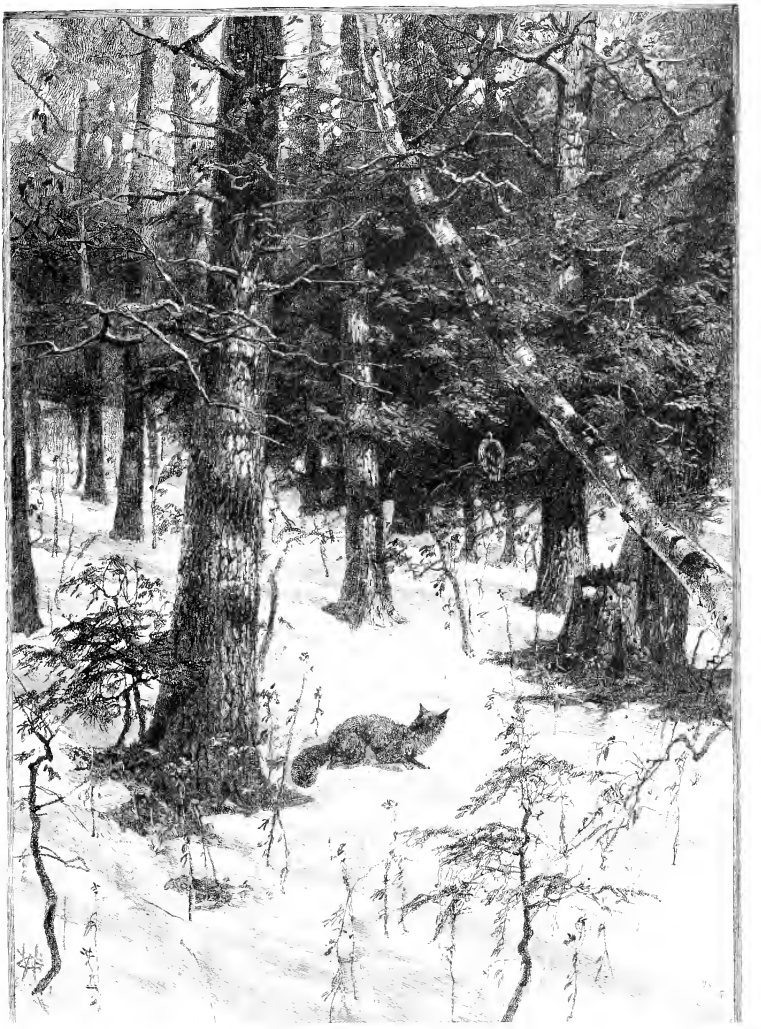
"I had intended to call to-night, but I am afraid there is almost too much wind for it."

"Did you mean to try to call up a moose, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry. "Oh, do let's try it, anyway. I should so like to see how it is done."

The trapper laughed and said: "You city people are all alike. You seem to think that in a country where large game is plenty, all that has to be done is to walk through the woods and scoop them

in right and left. But the fact is that a person might range these woods for a month and never see hide nor hair of anything larger than a rabbit, unless he did it in the right way and at the right time. You mustn't think, because you have chanced on a moose and a caribou in the short time you have been here, that that's the ordinary run of luck. Animals have a mighty good notion of when it is healthy to be around and when it is healthy to leave; and they have the nose and ears to give them all the information they need to make up their mind about it too. If that caribou we saw over on the Little River had come from any other direction than that by which it did come, it would have smelled our fire a quarter of a mile or more off, and we would never have even dreamed it had been anywhere near us. Nothing seems to astonish city people more than the apparent scarcity of animals in these woods. They come with the notion that the backwoods must just swarm with life. They go away with the idea that little except a few scattering birds is to be found here. If they could only see it after the snow begins to fall, when every moving thing leaves its track behind, they'd go to the other extreme, and think that the animals were so thick that they almost jostled one another when they moved about. The reason they don't see more is not that there are none to see, but because the animals see, hear, or smell them and clear out long before they are in seeing distance.

"As to moose-calling, it's one of the most delicate operations that can be tried in the woods—that is, if it is to amount to anything. It is the call of the cow that is imitated, and it means in moose language that the lady moose is at home, that she feels lonely, and that if there is any gentleman moose in the neighborhood she would be happy to see him. The places in this country where moose-calling can be tried with a chance of success are not many. It must of course be a place where moose range; it must be an open place, free from any cover except that occupied by the hunters; and it must be a place where the moose cannot cross the back track of the hunters without first offering a shot. The calling is done in the evening or early morning, when moose are moving about. A full moon is necessary, that there may be light enough to shoot by. The night



"AFTER THE SNOW BEGINS TO FALL."

should be dead-still, so that the call may spread to the greatest distance without being drowned by the sound of the wind through the trees, and so that an approaching animal cannot get the scent of the hunters. But I'll tell you all about it to-morrow; it would be worse than useless to try to call to-night. We can range the stream for an hour or two, if you like, on the chance of catching one crossing. What do you say?"

Both boys approved the suggestion. Thereupon the trapper produced from a shelf in the camp a large dark lantern, provided with a powerful light and reflector. A glass lens six inches in diameter formed the front of the lantern. Over this fitted a cover, hinged below and opening from above, so that when the cover was closed the light was shut off entirely. The joint where the cover fitted over the glass was padded with buckskin, so that the cover could be opened and shut without the slightest noise; and every aperture about the lantern was so protected that not the faintest glimmer of light could escape except when the cover was dropped. This the trapper called a "jack-lamp," or more frequently simply a "jack." He removed the lamp, filled it with oil, trimmed the wick carefully, and lighted it. He then proceeded to scour the silvered reflector at the back of the lantern-case and polish the glass lens till both were speckless. He then replaced the lighted lamp in the lantern, set it on the table, and said:

"There; we'll let the light burn till the jack is hot. We want all the light we can get without smoke. The oil flows more freely to the wick after it gets warm, and a light that burns all right when the jack is cool will smoke like a pine-knot when it becomes hot. For lack of a little care in this, many a man has opened his jack to shoot and found the inside covered with soot and the jack useless. While we are waiting I'll give you a few points, in case we do come across something. You see, the principle we go on is that an animal with that light in its eyes can't see anything behind it. If that was the only thing to be considered we would go with the jack open; but it isn't. A deer, unless it has been shot at from under a jack a good deal, will generally stand to a light, staring at it until you can get plenty near enough to shoot. Sometimes caribou

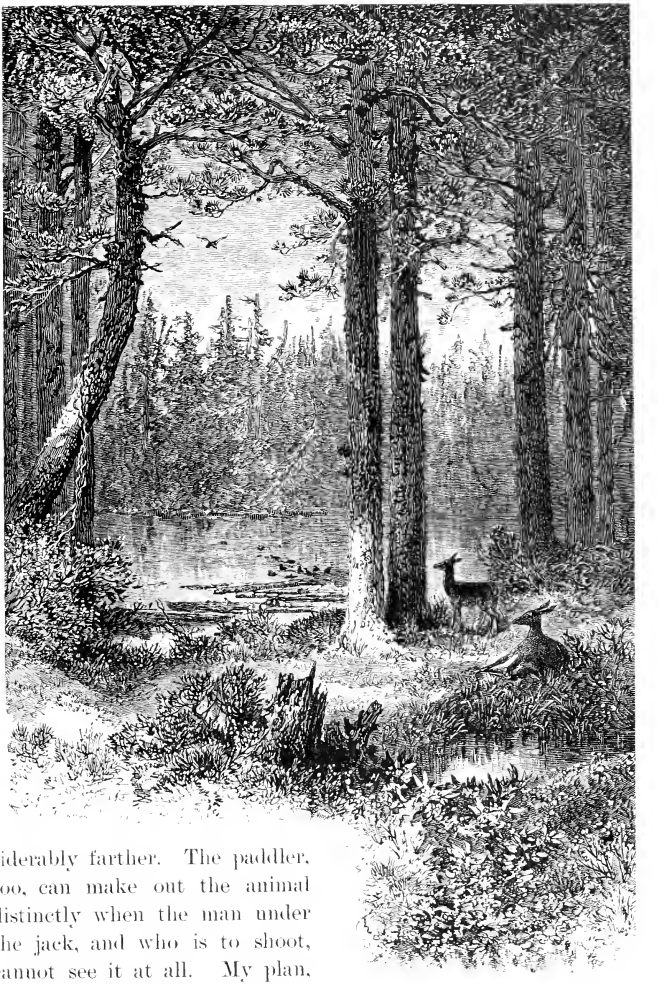
will too, and sometimes they won't. Nobody can tell just what caribou will do beforehand, for one moment they will be the stupidest of the stupid, and at the next the shyest of the shy. Moose won't stand to a light at all, as far as my experience goes. At the first sight of it they bounce into the woods, and if they care to study it any further, do it from there, where they are safe. The light of a jack or of the moon will not penetrate the bushes or woods one single inch. The outer leaves will shine like silver, but beyond them it will seem as dark as the inside of a fire-proof safe. An animal may be not three feet behind the shining leaves, yet be as invisible as though in the next State. I've seen many and many a sportsman ready almost to tear his hair when he could hear his game thrashing about in the bushes not forty feet away, and yet couldn't locate them so as to fire, to save his neck."

"Couldn't he shoot at the sound?" asked Dick.

"Not to hit anything except the wide, wide world," replied the trapper. "You see, most people's nerves are a little disturbed at such times, and then the coolest man can hardly locate a sound at night so as to warrant a shot. In this kind of hunting we rely entirely on our ears to tell when we are near game. Keep just as still as you can and listen for all you are worth, is the rule. There must be no talking, nor whispering, nor moving about in the boat. It's cold, crampy kind of business you'll find, and requires a great deal of patience and perseverance. Do what you will, use all the skill that man can use, and still it may be, and often is, all thrown away. There may be nothing near the water; or a dozen animals may cross above or below you, but out of sight and hearing from the place you happen to be."

"How far will the jack show an animal plain enough to shoot, Mr. Dant?" asked Harry.

"Not as far as you'd think. It depends a good deal on the background against which the animal stands. If the animal has white on it, and stands so that the light strikes the white, that part can be seen farther than the rest of it. Somewhere between thirty and forty feet will be about the average distance at which the body can be seen by the man under the jack. The eyes can be seen con-



HOME OF THE DEER.

siderably farther. The paddler, too, can make out the animal distinctly when the man under the jack, and who is to shoot, cannot see it at all. My plan, and the only plan, in my judg-

ment, where anything larger than deer is wanted, is to go dark, and only to open the jack when near enough to shoot; that is, unless the animal starts when you are almost, but not quite, near enough. In that case, opening the jack will generally stop even a moose, for a moment or two, and give time and opportunity to get close enough. We must rely on our ears alone to tell us when game is near. Since my ear is better trained, I will probably first hear any animal we may come across to-night. Besides, I can tell better whether any sound is made by the game we are after or not. You will hear lots of noises, such as musk-rats running through the grass or diving, that you might mistake for game, but which I would understand. So if I hear anything worth while to-night, I will shake the boat. That won't make any noise, but you'll feel it quick enough to know that something is up just as well as if I spoke. The lamp is all right now. Take your blankets and let's be moving."

On arriving at the water's edge, the trapper fastened a short pole to the right-hand side of the front seat of the boat, upon which he secured the jack. He then produced two rough boards split from a tree, and arranged them as backs for the front and middle seats. He then launched the boat, spread the blankets over the seats, and told the boys to take their places; Harry, whose turn it was to shoot, on the bow, and Dick as passenger on the middle seat. That their feet might make no noise if moved, he next arranged the blankets so that they covered the bottom of the boat, and then wrapped them carefully up and tucked the blankets in all around them. As arranged on the jack-staff, the jack was just over Harry's head, clearing it, as he sat, by about an inch. He made Harry open and close the jack a number of times, until he could readily find and unfasten and fasten the catch of the cover by feeling. He then had him throw his rifle to his shoulder in a convenient position for shooting, and turned the jack-staff until the powerful beam of light from the jack took the direction in which the rifle was pointed.

"There, that's all right so far. Now, Harry, remember to shoot at what you see, and not at what you can't see and have to guess

HUNTING BY MOONLIGHT.

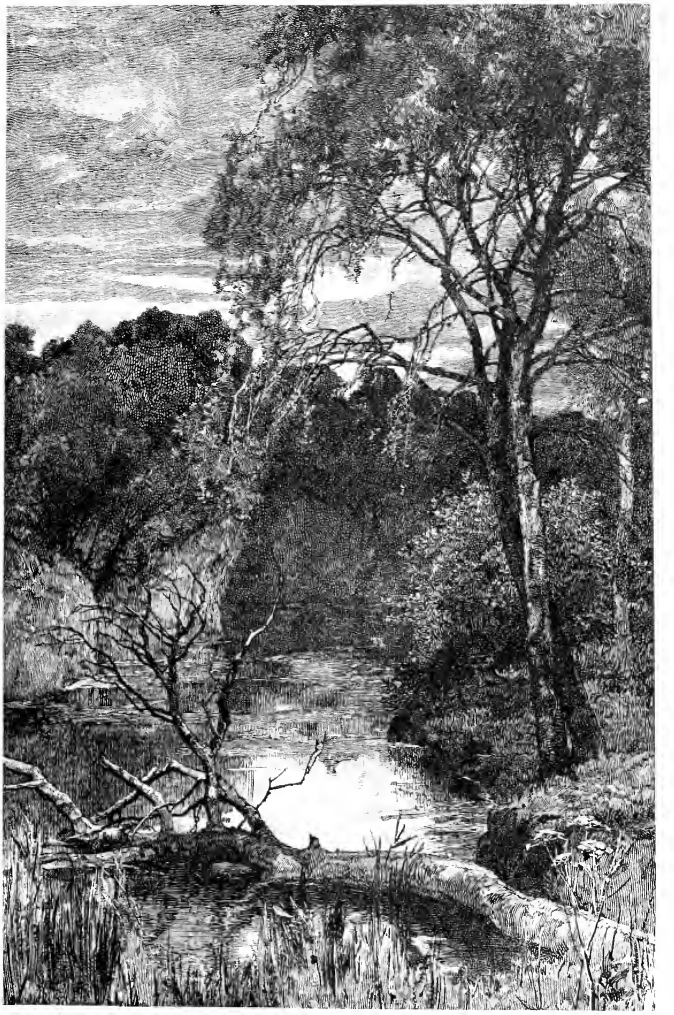
the position of. Deer are to go free, as we have venison enough. Don't try a head shot if you can see the neck or any of the forward part of the body; and don't try a neck shot if you can get one into the forward third of the body. If the animal is facing you, give it to it where the neck joins the body, or as near there as you can see. If you have to fire at the side of the neck, aim about a quarter of the way down from its top edge. If you can see only the animal's eyes, don't shoot unless I whisper to you. It's a hard shot, as the end of the animal's nose will be pointing right at you, and unless

you hold dead straight it will be a clean miss. That shot should never be tried at night unless it is impossible to get nearer. If the animal is broadside to, fire through the middle of the fore-shoulder, not behind it, but right through the middle of it, and about one-quarter of the distance from the breast-line to the back. After you have fired once, shoot again if you have the chance. But if not, close the jack at once and keep just as still as you can until I speak to you in my natural tone of voice. Lean a little forward when you aim, so as to get the light on the back as well as on the front sight of the rifle. You will then be able to aim at anything you can see as well as if it were broad daylight. Take your time to shoot, and aim at a particular spot as though your life depended on putting the bullet within the breadth of a dollar. A moose shows up very large under a jack, but the places where a bullet must strike to knock it off its legs are small. So be careful to choose those places and be careful to hit them. When your legs get too cramped to stand it any longer you may move them, but when you do it, or move your body, try to be as quiet as possible. But if I have shaken the boat, stand it if you can. Now throw a cartridge into the rifle-barrel, half cock it, close the jack, and let's be off."

So saying, the trapper took his seat in the stern of the boat, folded his blanket around him from the waist downward, seized his paddle, and pushed from the bank.

An almost full moon just topped the eastern hills, lighting up the western margin of the stream and the woods which approached the bank, except when patches of scudding clouds veiled its face. Dense shadows projected over the water from the eastern bank, cutting sharply into the radiant water like a smear of pitch upon a mirror. A gentle breeze, keen and cold, occasionally touched the water. It came like a breath, making the visible face of Nature shiver, lasted but for a moment, and then died away in renewed calm. But ashore the evergreen forest sighed and moaned under the influence of the wind like the voice of a sick man. Upon the tense nerves of the boys the effect was decidedly weird and ghostly.

In the gloom, and close to the bank that made it, the canoe stole on. The very shadows lay not more silent on the water than



A LIKELY PLACE FOR GAME.

was the motion of the boat. Neither by ear nor by sense of feeling could the boys detect that it moved at all. It seemed rather as though they were stationary, and that the moonlit bank was moving slowly by them like a panorama.

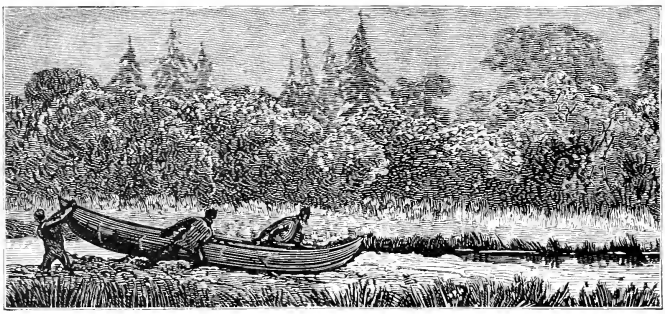
When the wind dropped down it seemed to them that the stillness could almost be felt. When it rose, the most varied and extraordinary sounds came from the forest, sounds so human, so agonized, so awful, that it appeared almost impossible they could be produced by anything devoid of life. Remembering that their ears were to be their guide, the boys listened, listened intently, listened as they had never listened before, listened as the blind man listens when every energy of his being is given to the only remaining sense which still connects him with the outside world. At times they thought they heard the tread of an animal on the bank, a rustle of the grass, or a movement in the water; but as the trapper made no sign, they concluded that it was a delusion. Indeed, so great was the strain upon them, and so frequent these apparent mistakes, that before long they began to question their own ability to distinguish the real from the imaginary.

Then the cold began to make itself felt. It seemed to hunt them over until it found an unguarded spot, then to bore in like a gimlet, and from where it reached the skin little icy shivers crawled over them in every direction. From time to time, and always when some fancied sound made them think the most absolute stillness necessary, an insane desire to cough, sneeze, blow their noses, or do something else equally inopportune, seized them. Again, their strong desire to move as little as possible made every position seem strained, uncomfortable, and cramped. Before the first half-hour had passed they were firm converts to the belief that success in that form of hunting was only to the patient and long-suffering.

Every little feeder to the main stream was entered and followed until the boat could go no farther. There it paused, and some minutes—interminable minutes to the boys—were passed in silent listening. At last, when in the judgment of the trapper the wait had been so long that any animal within hearing must have made

known its presence by some movement, the boat slowly and silently returned and again began to ascend the main stream. A short distance below the beaver dam the boys detected something moving in the water. A moment later five black ducks sailed from the shadow into the moonlight, evidently in great excitement and uncertainty as to the character of the dark object they saw approaching. Suddenly, when the boat was about thirty feet from them, they left the water with a tremendous splash and flutter of wings, and with hoarse quackings vanished up-stream and into the night.

Though it happened before their eyes and the cause was perfectly apparent, the sudden clamor after such protracted stillness acted



OVER A BEAVER DAM.

on the nerves of the boys like an electric shock. Dick gave a start that set the boat to rocking violently. But it was upon the more excitable temperament of Harry that the effect was most disastrous. The rifle was discharged in his hands, the bullet singing its way over the bog into the distant woods. To their startled ears the report sounded like that of a six-pounder, and echoed and re-echoed from hill to hill in a roll of thunder which seemed as though it would never end.

"Good gracious! What did you do that for?" whispered the trapper.

"I didn't mean to," replied Harry, in a voice broken by the

keenness of his sense of shame. "I had my hand on the hammer of the rifle so that I could get ready to shoot quick if a chance came, and the sudden noise made me start so that I pulled it off somehow."

"Well, it can't be helped now, anyway. We'll land on the little island at the beaver dam and see what's to be done." A few moments later all three stood on the island, the boat lying half across the beaver dam, equally ready for up-stream or camp.

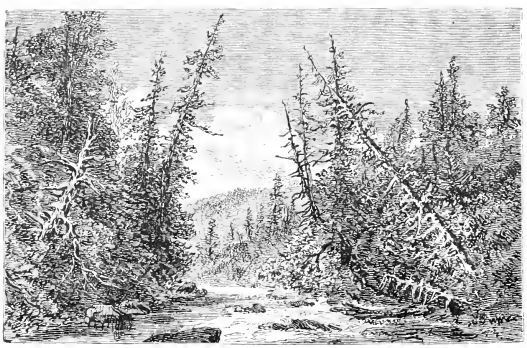
"Our chances were not really first-rate when we started," said the trapper, "and that shot and the ducks haven't improved them any. I am not sure but the ducks are worse than the shot. We'll put them up two or three times more before we reach the head of the stream, and then they will get below us and we'll put them up two or three times more on our way back. Every time they'll make noise enough to wake the dead, let alone to put a moose on guard."

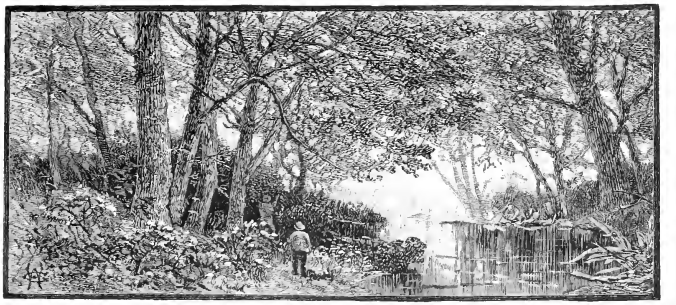
"The shot was a good deal louder," said Harry. "I ought to be kicked! But I won't spoil things again. It's no use to take the trouble to give me any more chances, Mr. Dant: I'm not good for anything, anyway. But Dick's all right. I'll wait here on the island till you and he get back, if you want to try it up-stream."

The sound of tears in Harry's voice would have silenced the kind-hearted trapper, even had he been more put out than he was.

"Not much," he replied. "You won't do that trick again, I know. The shot will certainly stir things up some; but if the bullet doesn't go near them, game often won't pay much attention to the sound of a gun unless close to it. Perhaps they think it thunder or a tree falling. I wish those ducks, though, were in the middle of next week. I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll wait here about ten minutes, to let things quiet down and get the cramps out of our legs. Then we'll try it up to the head of navigation, and if we hear nothing we'll go back to camp. You take the rifle again, Harry. Keep it on the half-cock, and your hands away from the hammer and trigger. Remember, if we do come across game you will hear it long before there will be any chance to shoot, so you'll have plenty of time to get ready."

It was near midnight when the boys disembarked at the camp boat-landing, tired, sleepy, with cramped and aching limbs, and cold to the very marrow of their bones. No indication of large game had been heard. As the trapper had foretold, the ducks proved a great annoyance. On nearing camp, they ran on them for the last time. "Confound those ducks!" whispered the trapper; "open your jack, Harry, and give 'em a dose." Harry did so, and with one shot killed two. It's true, the heavy, flat-pointed bullet laid them open, until they looked more like the remains from a railroad accident than game fit for food; but that was a matter of appearance rather than reality. The trapper was so loud and long in his praise of the shot that it was with reassured self-respect and renewed confidence in himself that Harry rolled himself in his blankets and fell asleep.





CHAPTER XIV.

The Woodsman's Axe and its Dangers.—An Accident.—"Grab it, there's buttons on it!"—Moose-calling.—The Trapper calls.—A Moose at last.—A startling Encounter.

AFTER breakfast, the next day, Harry asked, "What are we going to do to-day, Mr. Dant?"

"The first thing is to build up our wood-pile, which is getting low. We must lay in enough to last till to-morrow and one day more. To-morrow we ought to get out of here for the lake, moose or no moose. I always make it a rule to have at least one day's firewood cut and in camp; for we always leave a camp by daylight and when we are fresh, but we generally come to a camp in the evening when we are tired, and often when it's too dark to see to use an axe with safety. You can come along and help carry in the wood, if you like."

To see the trapper use his axe was always a fresh revelation to the boys. Not only did the result accomplished seem out of all proportion to the time and labor expended, but he appeared to have perfect control of what that result should be. Every time he felled a tree, he told the boys where it would fall and where they

should stand to be in safety, and every time his prediction was accurately fulfilled.

Before long, Harry, as usual, began to effervesce. "Oh, Mr. Dant, please let me try the axe a little while, and show me how. You ought to have seen us the night we camped on the island in the river—the night before our shipwreck. You do more in half a minute than I could do then in nearly an hour, and I tried my best, too. I don't want to get caught that way again; for I can see now that a person might just as well be without his ten fingers in the woods, as without an axe and knowing how to use it."

"You are quite right, Harry, that an axe and skill to use it are both indispensable in the woods. But they are no place for a beginner to learn its use. Hospitals and doctors are scarce up here. An axe is good for nothing unless sharp, and where it falls it leaves its mark, no matter whether what its edge strikes is living or dead. Of all the dangers of the woods its use is by far the greatest. A knot, a twig, almost any unexpected thing met in the downward blow, may make the axe glance, and before you know it the mischief is done. The better the axeman, the more ready to admit the danger even to himself; and if it is a danger to one who can almost split a hair at every blow, how much greater must it be to one who, like you, has no idea when he strikes where within four or five inches the axe will fall. No; you let the axe altogether alone, both of you. Remember, you are not to touch it at all under any circumstances. I have seen too much trouble from that sort of thing in my day ever to want to see any more if I can help it."

"Of course I knew that an axe would cut a man as well as a log," said Dick, "but I never thought such a thing was likely to happen by accident."

"It is liable to happen by accident, and it's liable to happen to any one, no matter how good a woodsman he may be," replied the trapper. "Two years ago last September an accident of that kind happened at this very camp. I was over here with another guide and two gentlemen. My companion found one of the gentlemen amusing himself by trying to split wood with his axe. He took it

away, warning him of the danger, and telling him that we would do all the axe-work required, and went on to finish what the gentleman was at. Now, a better hand with an axe than my companion couldn't be found. He had been at it all his life. Yet the second or third blow he made he split his foot nearly to the instep, and that in broad daylight, and almost in the door-way of the camp. I was down at the boat-landing when it happened. The shouts of the gentlemen soon brought me up. There I saw my companion sitting on the ground as pale as death, holding his foot together with his hands, the blood streaming out between his fingers. It couldn't have been more than a minute after it occurred, but it seemed to me as if he had bled a quart already. I was scared almost stiff, I can tell you. There he was, how badly hurt I couldn't tell, two days from help for the most able-bodied man, unable to move himself, and with miles and miles of unbroken forest to be passed somehow. But that was no time to consider the future unless we proposed to limit our help to digging a hole to put him in, for at that rate he'd soon bleed to death. I told the gentlemen to hold his foot together the best they could so as to stop the bleeding as much as possible, while I grabbed a tin cup and jumped for the woods. I filled the cup half full of pitch from fir-trees as quick as I could, but when I got back he had fainted from loss of blood. We then cut off his shoe and stocking, brought the wound together, wiped off the blood, plastered his foot all over with pitch, tore up our shirts and bound it up tight. That stopped the bleeding. We then carried him inside, dosed him with some brandy one of the gentlemen had, and laid him on the bunk.

"Well, to make a long story short, we made a litter, and for three days, as long as we could see, we lugged him through the woods, camping just where night overtook us. The gentlemen acted like bricks. It was a new kind of thing to them, not being used to hard labor, but they stuck to it as though it was the very thing they had come up here for. We reached the lake in the afternoon, rowed across it, got a lantern, and kept right on across the carry to the Forks. It must have been nearly ten o'clock at night when we reached the river, and we were pretty well played out; but we

didn't stop on that account. We put him aboard a boat, making him as comfortable as we could, rowed all night down the river, carried him from the head of the falls to the road, then hunted up a team, and drove him into the settlement. The gentlemen were completely exhausted. At first they couldn't eat a thing without being sick, and I began to be scared about them; but a couple of days' rest brought them round all right."

"Did he get well?" asked Harry.

"Yes, he pulled through it after a while; but then he was in perfect health and as tough as a pine-knot. I believe the average city man would have died on the way. There isn't a year passes that some one I know doesn't hurt himself that way; and they don't all get off as well as that, by any means. I know two brothers, experienced axemen, one of whom lost his leg, and the other became lamed for life from axe-wounds in the knee, both in the same season. You think I can use an axe; yet down on that boat-landing I split my hand open about five years ago. I tried to stick it out, but the consequence was I was forced to leave the woods for a doctor, and came mighty near losing my hand. It was over three months before I could do anything. No; you take my word for it, a man who isn't used to an axe has no business with it —at least, with any axe sharp enough to be good for anything up here."

"Now you explain it," said Dick, "I can easily see that it must be very dangerous, but it never occurred to me before. I promise you I won't touch the axe."

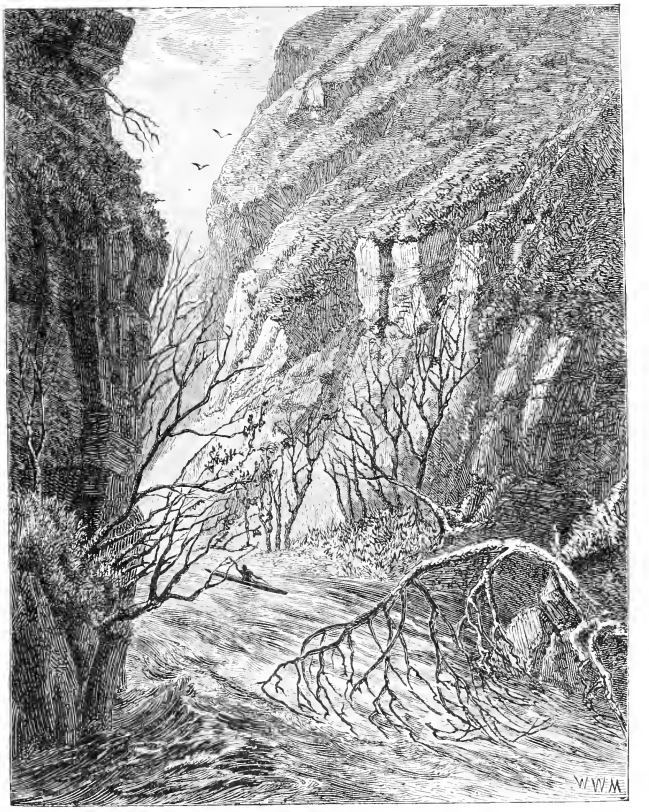
"Nor I either," said Harry.

"You'd better grab that idea and hang on to it," said the trapper. "There's buttons on it."

"There's what?" exclaimed Dick and Harry, in a breath.

"You never heard that expression before, I suppose. It's common enough, though, among us woodsmen, whenever we want to encourage any one to do a thing. It means that it will pay to do it. There's a story connected with it, but I think by this time you must be sick enough of my yarns."

"Let's have it," said Harry. "I like your stories first-rate."



BETWEEN THE LAKE AND THE FORKS.

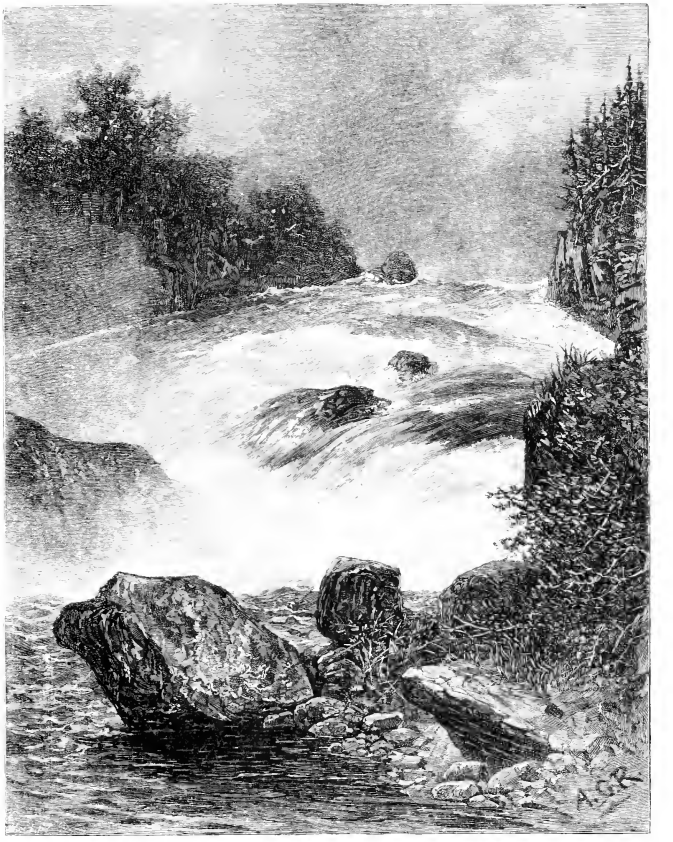
"Well, I'm glad of that. I began to be afraid you'd think my tongue wagged at both ends, like an old woman's. But you see, all the talking I am to do from now until well into May must be done while you're here. After you leave, it will most likely be five months before I have any one to speak to again. We'd

better get our wood in now. After dinner I'll tell you about it, if you like."

By the time the wood was cut, split, carried to camp, and piled up, preparations for dinner were in order. Dinner over, Harry reminded the trapper of his promise.

"You remember the man that I rode over with the deer? Well, the expression originated with him. Billy had a regular craze for collecting things, and its main object was buttons. I believe he had nearly half a bushel, in which could be found every known size, shape, and material. It was in the fall, and he and another man were bound out of the woods for the winter, and I was to help them down the river, and return alone with some supplies. We had a lot of stuff to take down, including Billy's museum of buttons; and as the river was pretty well up, we concluded to try to run it in a boat over the rapids between the lake and the Forks, instead of backing it over the carry. There's about five miles of those rapids—in places very nasty. The best of it isn't much better than the Big Rip, where you came to grief. We arranged for the man to take the bow, I the stern, and Billy to go in the middle as passenger. Through the worst of it we intended to drop her down on poles the way I explained to you—that is, hold her back with our setting-poles, and let her down slow and easy.

"Everything went all right for nearly two-thirds of the way. Then we came to about as cruel-looking a piece of water as I care to see. The current was running like a mill race, roaring and foaming feather-white over and among the rocks. Just as we were fairly into it, the bow-man jammed his pole between a couple of stones and couldn't get it out. He hung to the pole, which bent like a trout-rod, but it was no use. He had to get out of the boat or let it go, for alone I couldn't force the boat up against the stream, to save my neck. I was in the wrong end of the boat for that. He let go. The check he put on the boat by hanging on to the pole gave her a set in-shore and nearly upset us. In an instant the current caught and carried her towards an old tree which had fallen into the river, over and under which the water boiled and foamed in a way that made me wish I was



"THERE'S ABOUT FIVE MILES OF THOSE RAPIDS—IN PLACES VERY NASTY."

back at the lake. If the current set us up against that tree, I knew it would roll us over in a little less than no time, and sweep the boat and all that was in it under the tree. If any of us did come out on the other side, I knew, at any rate, we'd get such a

curry-combing on the way as would make us think we'd gone through a threshing-machine. It was a time to make a man stir himself, if there was any stir in him, and you may just believe that I clawed water with that pole all I knew. It was a close squeak, but we were just going clear. Then in an evil moment Billy caught sight of an old jacket which some one had abandoned, hanging on the tree. He couldn't stand the temptation. Starting to his feet, he sung out, 'Grab it, there's buttons on it!' It was no kind of a time or place for a bear-dance, anyway. The boat was already half full of water from the trouble with the pole, and was in no condition to stand any more nonsense. Before I could get my mouth more than half-way open to tell him to keep quiet, the boat was bottom up, and we were finning it in the water for dear life.

"When we'd fished out ourselves and such of our belongings as we could find, 'Grab it, there's buttons on it!' had made an impression on us not easy to forget. So to this day all through this neighborhood, if any man is in doubt whether he ought to do a thing or not, if any one encourages him to try it, it is always by the words, 'Grab it, there's buttons on it!'"

"I should think you would have been awful mad," said Harry.

"Well, I have seen times when I have been better pleased," replied the trapper, "but there was no time for talk if we wanted to save any of our stuff, particularly the boat. Then the water was about as cold as it well could be and not be solid, and there was a freezing wind blowing. But I'm not sure if the cream of the performance was not diving in the eddy below the tree for our axes. I don't think I ever went into a job with any less enthusiasm. It had to be done, though, for we had to have a fire. One axe was all that was absolutely necessary, and when we had that we didn't dive any longer for anything else. Even the precious collection of buttons couldn't induce Billy to take another souse. Some fellow will find a regular button-mine in the river one of these days. Then how he will wonder how it got there!"

"Do you think we shall have a good night for moose-calling?" asked Dick.

"The weather looks promising now," replied the trapper, "but

DROPPING DOWN A RAPID ON POLES.

you mustn't get your ideas up too high. It's pretty late in the season for it now. Unless a bull that has no cow with him happens to be within hearing, we won't make anything at it."

"How do you call them?" asked Harry.

"To begin at the beginning, the first thing is to make a horn. To do this, a cone of wood about two feet long and about five inches across the base must be made. Then good, sound white birch bark is soaked in hot water, wrapped round the cone until it's

"MADE ME WISH I WAS BACK AT THE LAKE."

about an eighth of an inch thick, and then tied there until it dries. When dry, the bark is taken off the cone, and fastened together by sewing it with a brad-awl and a thong of leather or a piece of twine. Then the ends are squared off with a knife so that the small end of the horn shows a hole about one inch, and the big end an opening from four and a half to five inches across; and a thing which looks like a big speaking-trumpet without a mouth-piece is the result. It isn't every piece of bark that will give the proper ring, and when we get a horn that's all right, we value it.

"As I told you, it's the call of the cow that we try to imitate. If they only made one sound it would be comparatively easy, but they don't. I sometimes have thought they had a regular language made up of sighs, grunts, groans, howls, and roars, running from one into the other, and varying in order so that it seems as if there wasn't any rule about it. Still, for a caller to grunt when he ought to howl, or get the order of things wrong and let out a roar before the groan, when it should have followed it, is dead ruin to his chances of success. To call up a moose to within thirty or forty yards, if it can get as near as that without leaving cover, is not very difficult; and a good many mistakes may be made without affecting that result. But then it answers the call with its big head brimful of suspicion, and to coax it out into the open ground is next to hopeless; and unless that can be done a shot is impossible.

"It is a hard thing to do at any time. They hate to quit the cover. Up to its edge they will come, and range up and down just out of sight, thrashing about and making an awful row. Then they will try to work in a circle around the place from where the call came. If they can do that and cross the hunter's trail, or get his scent from the wind, that ends the thing at once. That moose has pressing business somewhere else. That's the reason why so few places up here are fit for moose-calling. You must have cover from which to call, the ground around it must be so open that the moon will show the animal up, and the trail to the stand must be completely under the command of the rifle.

"Sometimes a moose will range up and down in the edge of the cover that way for almost an hour. One minute you think he is coming out, the next that he is off for good; and so it goes on. Of all the forms of hunting I know anything about, it's altogether the most exciting.

"That's the time for a real artist in moose-calling to show himself. He grunts, groans, howls, roars, sighs, rasps his horn against the bushes like a bull-moose polishing his antlers, and even gives the bull's challenge as a last resort. He does these and many other things, all in their proper order and place, not too loud, yet loud enough, and no two of the same loudness. Among all these he

must choose which of the many is the right thing to do, and make no mistake about it either in choice or imitation. For when the moose is so near he is a mighty keen critic, and not to be fooled unless everything is just right. Then, besides knowing what sounds

MOOSE-CALLING.

to make, and how to make them, the caller must know when to keep silent altogether. My way is to keep still when a moose is near, and to speak to it only when it has ranged to some little distance. Even then, the best plan, in my judgment, is for the caller to leave the man who is to shoot, and to move back forty or fifty

yards if he can, and give the bull's challenge. A bull-moose is the strictest kind of a monopolist. He won't stand any interlopers, and if that call doesn't fetch him out nothing will.

"A bull-moose may answer the original call by a single short, sharp sound, very feeble for such a big animal, and something like a dog's bark; or it may say nothing at all. But whether it answers or not, it will come as straight as the crow flies to the spot from where the call proceeded. No matter how dark the woods may be —and you know it's dark in there even on the brightest moonlight night—it seems never to lose its reckoning. If the call has been all right it will probably come crashing through the woods without a thought of concealment; but if its suspicions have been aroused not a sound will warn you of its approach until it is within a few yards. A good caller on a favorable night can be heard over two miles. No mistake is worse than to call too often. My rule is to call, and then wait three-quarters of an hour. The call may have been heard, and the moose may be coming. It may not have answered at all, or it may have answered out of hearing—at any rate, it may be quite near even though nothing has been heard from it. To give a moose a chance to criticise so long a performance as the original call at close quarters would give the trick away at once. Three-quarters of an hour is, however, plenty long enough and to spare to give any moose within hearing time to come up and make itself known. This time must be given strictly to listening, and nothing else. No talking, nor moving about—nothing but listening with all your might. To hear the animal as soon as possible, so that the caller can judge what temper it is in and how it may best be coaxed, is of the utmost importance.

"Very often, I might almost say generally, nothing will be heard. I then call again, and wait as before. If this fails, a third trial may be made; but if there is any other fit place within reach, it is better to try it there. If there isn't, and the third call fails, you may as well give it up. Either no bull-moose is within hearing distance, or if there is, it already has a companion, and won't come, anyhow.

"Nothing in my experience with moose, caribou, and deer aston-

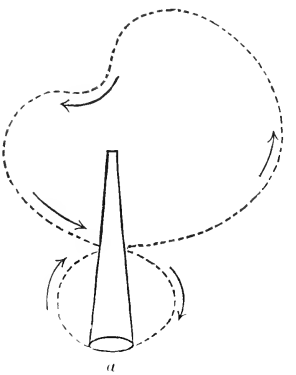
ishes me more than the way they can get through the woods at night. As I said before, any solitary bull-moose will locate the sound of a call two miles or more away, and come for it as straight as if he was on a turnpike, no matter how dark the night or rough the ground over which it must pass. Start one of these animals from the bank of a stream or pond on the darkest kind of a night, and it will go through the woods on the keen jump over rocks and windfalls where a man could hardly make a hundred feet in half an hour. You would think they would break their thin legs like pipe-stems more than forty times before they'd covered a quarter of a mile, but somehow they don't. How they do it beats me."

About eight o'clock that evening Harry and Dick found themselves perched on a platform built of poles in the tops of a clump of small spruces, one of the many islands of trees which dotted the surface of the bog. The margin of the stream could be seen not thirty yards distant, and through the middle of the open ground they had reached their stand under the guidance of the trapper. Nothing could approach their trail without exposing itself to view. On every side, the full moon glistened like silver on the whitish moss which carpeted the bog, which was open to view for forty or fifty yards in every direction. The boys saw at once, from what the trapper had told them, that the place was well chosen.

They first climbed to their perch, and then hoisted up their blankets by a rope. They then lowered the rope, the trapper fastened it to the rifle, climbed up himself, and the rifle was pulled up. The trapper then placed the boys in a position to face the hills from which he expected the game would come, if it came at all, wrapped them up in their blankets, loaded the rifle, half-cocked it, put it in Harry's hands, and cautioned the boys to be still and to keep their ears open. He then rose to his knees, facing the mountains, applied his horn to his lips, its mouth pointing directly downward. Again and again he inflated his lungs and silently breathed through the horn to dampen its interior, and thus facilitate the production of the tone.

Then taking in the last cubic inch of air he could find room for,

he began. A weird, unearthly sound rose on the still night air—not loud at first, but gradually gaining in strength and rising in pitch, until it died away in a strain so wild, so plaintive, it would almost move a heart of stone. During the call, which may have lasted some thirty seconds, the mouth of the horn had gradually described a figure in the air something like the figure eight, the highest elevation coinciding with the loudest part of the call; and the movement was completed, and the call died away, with the mouth of the horn again pointing directly downward. During the call the head of the trapper conformed to the movement of the horn by bending his neck, and the result was a peculiar quavering inflection difficult to obtain otherwise and essential to success.



MOVEMENT OF THE HORN IN THE MOOSE-CALL.

a, mouth of the horn. Arrows show direction of motion.

A pause of two or three seconds and again the cry rang out. This time it was pitched a little higher in the scale, and the greatest volume of sound was nearer the beginning, the pitch again rising with the intensity of the tone, quavering, and dying away as before.

Another pause briefer than before, and again the call broke the oppressive stillness of the night. It began with every accent of impatience, and as loud as would admit of an increase of power at the finish. The intensity of the tone was varied from both previous calls, as was the motion of the horn, until, with its mouth pointing directly at the mountain, the call ended in a wild roar, delivered with all the power of the trapper's lungs, and terminating abruptly in silence when at its very loudest.

Then followed the weary wait. It was their jacking experience over again. First they thought they heard all sorts of things; then

they doubted if they had really heard anything; and finally concluded they could not distinguish what they actually heard from what they fancied they heard. The cold and the cramps, too, repeated themselves. Again and again Harry asked the trapper in a whisper whether it wasn't time to call again, and again and again received "No" for his answer. At last, after what both boys felt sure must be at least two hours, the trapper whispered, "I'll call again; and if we hear nothing, our only chance is to try the jack."

The call was made as before. At last, after an apparently interminable time, the trapper said: "I was afraid it would turn out this way so late in the season; but it doesn't follow, because there is no solitary bull in hearing, that there is nothing for us. Stretch yourselves and get the cramps out of you before you try to climb down. I'll lower the rifle first, then you get down and unfasten it, and I'll lower the other things. Then chase one another about a while till you get warm, and we'll try the jack."

The boat had proceeded some half-mile down-stream, stealing along without a sound under the shadow of the bank. The boys had abandoned all hope. They had lost all reckoning of where they were, or how far distant the now earnestly wished for camp might be. Suddenly they heard a sound below them, slow and measured—"slosh, slosh, slosh." Then silence followed. There was no mistaking this time that the sound was actual and not imaginary, and that it differed from anything they had heard before. But were there room for doubt, it was instantly removed by the shaking of the boat. It was the preconcerted signal. They had come on large game other than deer at last.

A moment before, the boys had felt chilled to the bone. Now the blood coursed through their veins like fire, and tingled to their very finger-ends. It seemed to them as though the dullest ear must detect their labored breathing and the loud beating of their hearts. If the boat had moved slowly before, a glance at the moonlit shore showed that it moved doubly slow now. Foot by foot, it barely crept along close under the shadow of the bank. Again the same sound was heard, and again silence followed it. The animal was

evidently still in the water, but how long would it remain there? Why did not the boat push on to meet it before it could escape?

At last came the low whisper, "Open the jack." In his excitement and hurry Harry fumbled the fastening some little time, but at last the cover dropped and the light streamed out. At the instant, out of the gloom in front of him, not much over thirty feet distant, appeared two great objects, dim and shadowy, of elephantine size. Their unexpected bulk, and the green, malevolent glare of their eyes under the light, paralyzed Harry for the moment. He stared at them without a motion. A moment later from the stern of the boat came the low whisper, "You've got to shoot."

At the sound, low as it was, the larger of the two animals turned, rushed across the stream with tremendous splashings, and crashed into the woods on the farther bank. The smaller hesitated, followed half-way, turned back again almost to the bank, then again changed its mind and moved once more to follow its companion. By this time Harry had recovered himself. He threw his rifle to his shoulder, and, mindful of what he had been told, leaned forward till the light settled well on its back sight, drew as careful an aim on the front of the animal's body as his shaking hands would permit, and pulled the trigger. In the confined space between the overarching trees the report of the rifle sounded like a perfect crash, and the sudden flash of light from its muzzle blinded him.

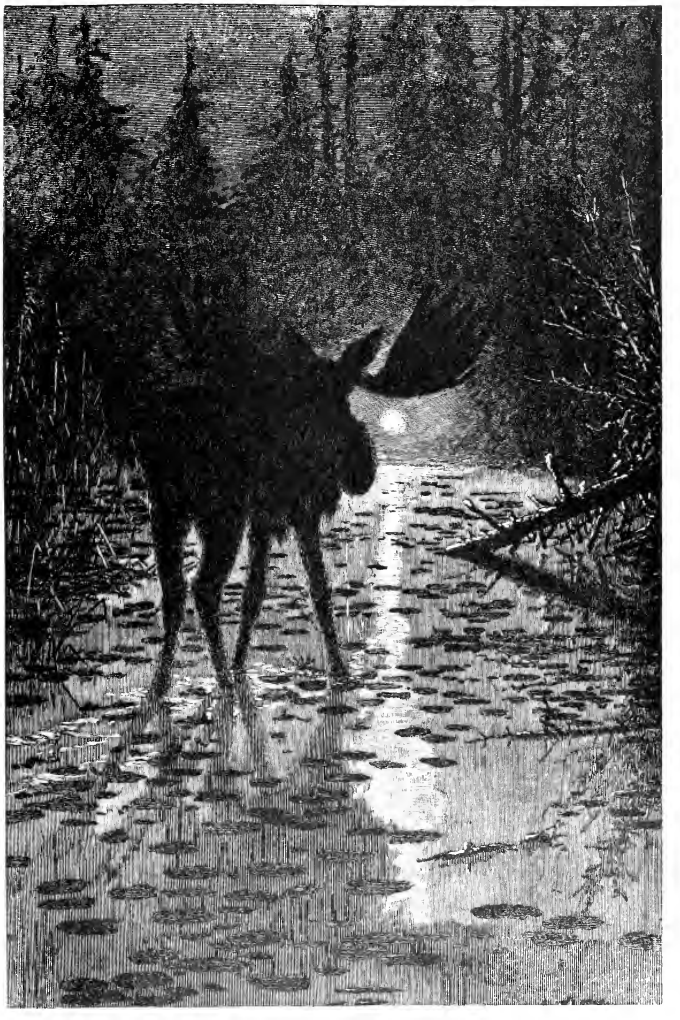
The next instant came the whisper, "Close the jack;" and the canoe withdrew twenty or thirty yards up-stream, and nestling close in to the shaded bank, came to a stop. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed without a sound. Then the trapper spoke in his natural voice.

"You've done it this time, Harry. That's our meat sure."

"Are you really sure, Mr. Dant? It seems too good to be true."

"As sure as death and taxes," replied the trapper. "It hasn't left the water, and it would have done it before this if it could. You may rely on it you've killed a moose for once in your life."

"So those were moose?" said Dick. "They looked big enough for elephants."



MOOSE-HUNTING BY JACK-LIGHT.

"Yes, those were moose, a bull and a cow. Harry's got the cow. I told you they showed up mighty big under a jack. Did you notice the horns on the bull?"

"Notice them?" said Dick. "I should think I did! They looked in that uncertain light as if they were at least six feet across; and how it did switch them about before it made up its mind what to do! How high do you suppose that bull was at the fore-shoulder, Mr. Dant?"

"It's pretty hard to say, as it stood in a foot or so of water. But it was about as large a moose as you often see. I should say it would stand very close to seven feet high. Anyway, you may make up your minds that you will have to hunt these woods for a long time before you will see a bigger one. That is, any one but you would."

"Why any one but us?" asked Harry.

"Because for cold luck you lads beat the record. The charm hasn't always seemed to work really first-rate on the water, but as far as chancing on game is concerned when everything is against you, I never saw anything like it. You couldn't have chosen a worse time during the whole year than this. It's betwixt and between, either too early or too late for any kind of hunting. Yet three moose, a caribou, and three deer have put themselves in your way during the short time you have been up here. There wasn't one chance in five hundred to-night of our coming on a moose crossing the river, and that was our only show after our calling failed. Yet you came on two, and just at the right minute, too."

"Our luck may be good, Mr. Dant," said Harry, "but our management, as soon as we can't rely on you, about makes it even. Why didn't I get the bull instead of the cow? Because I'm such a lunk-head that I was gaping at them as if they were made of fireworks and I was waiting to see them blow up. If you hadn't whispered to me, and the bull hadn't started out, I don't believe I'd have thought of firing until now. It's no use, Mr. Dant. I begin to think I'm good for nothing in the woods except to make a fool of myself. If Dick had been in my place he would have got the bull sure."

"Oh, come, Harry, what's the use of talking that way?" replied Dick. "I don't believe I would have done half as well. I don't see how any one could have done much better than to kill his game right on the spot with a single shot. I didn't do that with my deer, though I had daylight to shoot by. To see those great animals suddenly start out of the night, apparently as big as a small church, and with a look in their eyes as if they were just hungering to eat you up, is enough to make any one forget himself for a minute."

"Right you are, Dick," said the trapper. "Harry has done first-rate. I only wish he could see what the most of them do the first time they try a moose. He'd think then he was a regular Napoleon Bonaparte among sportsmen, instead of fancying he is good for nothing. That bull was old and tough. The way he got out of there showed he had the wisdom which comes from long experience. He didn't stop to fool any time away on sentiment for his companion, but just took care of his own hide without a second's hesitation. The cow will be ever so much better eating, and if Harry is mourning for the head and horns, and thinking how he would have liked to show them at home, why, I can tell him we could not have taken them out from here, anyway. There's a limit to what a man's back can carry. But now that we've talked the thing over, suppose we open the jack and hunt up our game."

A short distance below, they found it lying dead upon a gravel-bar at the edge of the shallow water. After the boys had had some time to examine their trophy, the trapper said:

"Well, boys, I suppose we had better think of camp now. We'll leave the moose here, since it won't run away before to-morrow morning, and because we can't move it anyway till we've cut it up. Dick, you take the bow and the rifle; Harry, you take the middle seat, close the jack, and let's be off. Keep quiet, and perhaps I may show you another surprise before we get through."

As the boat ran down the stream the boys thought they had never experienced a night so still. The many sounds that usually attract attention after dark in the woods of the settlements were entirely wanting. It seemed like the silence of death itself. Suddenly, from within thirty feet of the boat came a noise as though a

stone at least two feet in diameter had been hurled from the top of some high tree into the water.

Both boys gave a violent start. "Good gracious! what's that?" exclaimed Harry.

"That's the surprise I said I'd show you," replied the trapper. "That's what I wanted you to keep quiet for. Now you can make as much noise as you like."

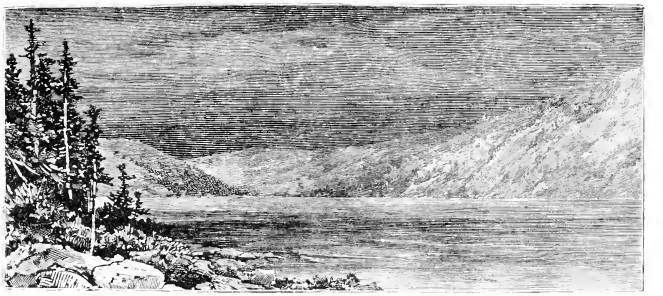
"But what was it?" asked Dick.

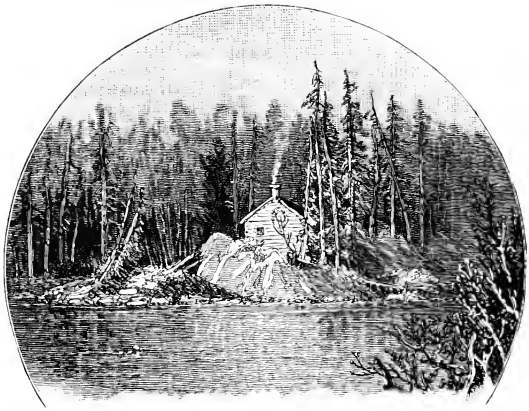
"That was one of our friends the beavers taking a quiet dive. That's the way they do when they are scared when swimming on the surface. Sometimes they'll keep it up for ten minutes on end, at the rate of one dive a minute or oftener."

"But I thought you said a beaver weighed only sixty pounds," said Harry. "The thing that made that noise must have weighed half a ton at least."

"I know it sounds so," replied the trapper. "That's where the surprise comes in. It's so hard to believe an animal not much over two feet long can make a noise the size of a two-story house, but it's a fact all the same. I've seen them do it many a time when I've come on them moonlight nights, and wished they'd take themselves and their noise somewhere else."

Soon afterwards they arrived at camp, tired but happy.





CHAPTER XV.

Return to the Lake.—"Tit for tat."—The Trapper Lectures on Caribou.—Appearance of the Caribou.—Habits of the Caribou.—The Caribou's Curious Tricks on the Ice.—Food of the Caribou.—A Trial of Speed.—A Chase on Snow-shoes.—A Caribou Hunt.

IN the evening of the third day after the death of the moose the boys drew near the lake with the last of their meat. Nothing but solid flesh free of bones and from the best parts of the animal had been brought, yet more than once fatigue had made them almost wish it still on foot in the forest. The last day had been unusually trying. A tempest of cold rain and sleet prevailed. The boys were astonished to find how much sooner they became wet through, and how much more thoroughly they were soaked in the woods, than would have been the case had they been exposed to the full fury of the storm without the apparent shelter of the trees. Every bush was charged with moisture, which showered down on them with the slightest touch, and which was forced through their clothes to their skins by incessant contact with the

many obstacles which had to be surmounted in their way. The ground became soft and soapy, while every root seemed as if it were greased. To add to their difficulties, their pack-straps became soggy and cut their shoulders, while the chill of their wet garments prohibited all but the briefest possible halts for rest. In vain the trapper laughed, joked, and exerted himself to keep up their spirits. The way seemed interminable. It was a phase of forest life they had never taken into consideration before, and a most unpleasant one they thought it. When at length the lake appeared, two more utterly wretched persons had seldom approached its shores.

Nor when the boat was at last reached were they allowed to rest. Each was given an oar, while the trapper used the paddle, till they landed before the camp. The boys had seen some magnificent buildings in their day, but never upon any one of them had their eyes rested with such pleasure as upon that humble log-hut.

The moment they were ashore the trapper said: "I'll look out for things here, you bounce for camp the best you know, strip to the skin, and roll yourselves up in the dry blankets hanging over the bunk. Then lie there till I come up and start the fire." They did so. The trapper pulled his boat high on the shore and fastened it, took care of the meat, built a fire in camp, and made some hot tea, of which he insisted that the boys should each drink nearly a pint. Then, and not till then, did he seem to begin to consider his own comfort.

All night long the wind roared, and sheets of rain, alternating with blinding snow-squalls, beat upon the camp. In the morning the storm still continued. After breakfast the trapper said:

"Well, boys, how do you feel after yesterday's little pleasure tramp?"

"I'm all right!" said Dick. "My shoulders are rather sore yet and I'm a little stiff, but it doesn't amount to anything."

"That's just my case," added Harry. "But, Mr. Dant, as things go in the woods, don't you call yesterday a pretty hard day? You kept whistling and singing and firing off your jokes; but honestly now, didn't you think to yourself it was pretty tough?"

"The woods are never very pleasant in wet weather," replied the trapper, "especially if it's cold wet weather; and, loaded as we were, it was what any woodsman would call a pretty rough tramp. But still, I will see many and many a worse one before the winter's over. You stuck it out first-rate, though—better than I expected, considering the loads you had."

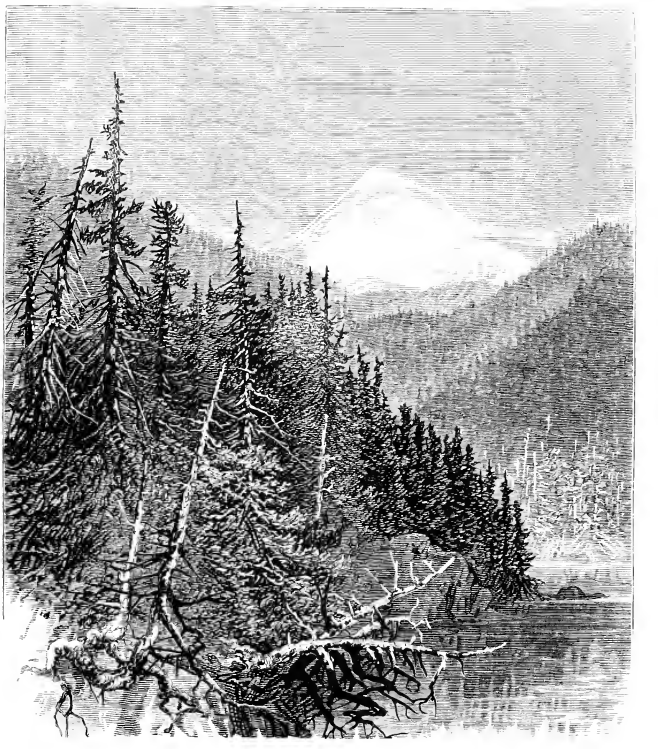
"I don't know what you expected," said Dick, "but I do know one thing, and that is, long before we reached the lake I thought I wouldn't be able to get over another half-mile."

"Why didn't you say so?" replied the trapper, "and I would have taken part of your load, or hung it on a tree and gone back for it. Ten or fifteen pounds on top of a man's load make a wonderful difference with his travelling; particularly in wet weather, when everything underfoot is so slippery. But you city people are all alike. If you don't always know what ought to be done in the woods as well as you think you do, you almost always have first-class pluck. I've seen many a city man stick to a pack to which he was entirely unaccustomed, when many countrymen, if so overworked, would have insisted on camping at once. I'll never forget one case of the kind. But there, I was nearly running off into another story."

"Oh, do let's have it!" said Dick. "There's nothing to do today except to listen to the wind roar and the pouring of the rain, is there?"

"Well, no, I don't know as there is," replied the trapper; "so here goes.

"One year a party of gentlemen arranged with me to meet them over in Canada to guide them to this camp through the woods. They were old hands at it, and had been up here a good deal and had seen most of the country. This was to be a new trip. They were an athletic lot, tennis and ball players, runners, jumpers, and I don't know what all. It's about a four days' tramp to get through if you are reasonably industrious. They had only one fault. They had a lot of novels with them, and after breakfast mornings they'd loll round smoking and reading. When the time came to make up packs and start, some one would always want 'to



WHEN AT LENGTH THE LAKE APPEARED.

just finish this chapter.' When he was through, another would be in the same fix, and so on. So we always made late starts and late camps, which is just the wrong way in the woods. At last we reached the camp over at the bog. We talked it over that evening, and all agreed to turn over a new leaf after that and get away at a reasonable hour the next day. When morning came we had to get in some more fire-wood before we started, so as to leave one

day's dry fuel in camp. One of the party went by the nickname of 'Tot.' While we guides were getting in the wood, he outs with his novel and begins to read. When we were through and the packs were all made up but his, as usual he 'just wanted to finish this chapter.'

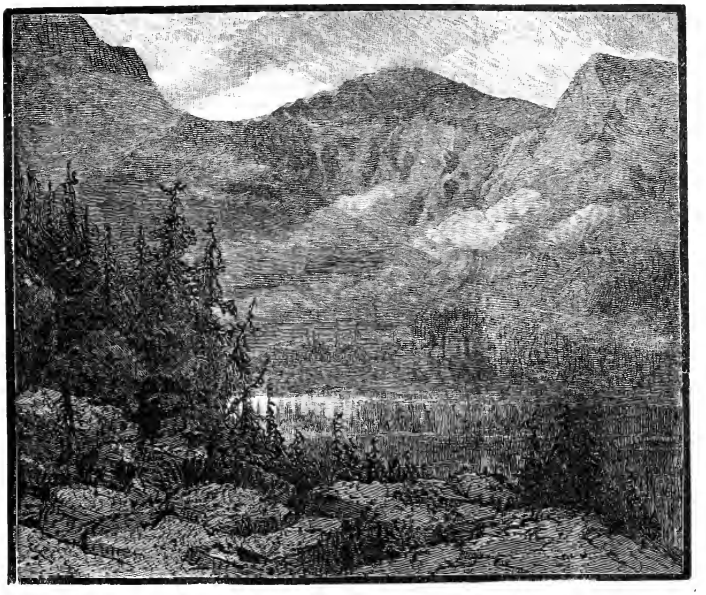
"We had knapsacks for all the party except one, and for him we had a big pack-basket. As every one hated the pack-basket, it was agreed that they should take turns at it. This was Tot's day. When the other gentlemen found that Tot was at the old game, they quietly took his basket down to the stream, dumped it, hunted up the biggest stone they could find that could be coaxed through its mouth, put it in, and covered it out of sight with the things they had taken out. They then carried it back without Tot's knowing it, made up his pack for him, and began once more to tease him to start. At last he got through his chapter and said he was ready. I thought he looked rather queer when he slung his pack, but I supposed it was because he was vexed at their teasing him.

"We didn't go the way you did, as we wanted to visit some ponds to the westward. We went down the bog stream and crossed on the rocks. After that it's a steady pull uphill till the top of the boundary ridge is reached. I led the way, with Tot just behind me. By-and-by I thought I heard him breathing pretty hard. Just then I climbed a tough windfall and turned to take a look at him. I saw at once that it was time for him to rest, though I thought it was rather queer that he should give out so quick; so I said, 'Boys, suppose we take a rest and smoke.' In a minute all the packs were off, and every man put himself in the position he thought most comfortable. Tot sat down on his pack, got out his handkerchief, and began to mop himself. He looked as though he needed it too. I went and brought him some water, which he drank; but he didn't seem to chipper up much.

"Then one of them said to another, 'Did you bring any specimens from the bog?'

"'No; did you?'

"'Yes; I always like to bring away a specimen or two from every place I camp at. They're such a pleasant reminder.'



"THEY ARE SPRING PONDS, AND MIGHTY COLD."

"'Why, what kind of specimen did you bring from the bog?'

"'Oh, a geological specimen—a perfect beauty. If you want to see it, it's in Tot's pack.'

"'Get up, Tot, and let's have a look at it.'

"You ought to have seen his face when he saw that stone—a stone about twice as big as an old-fashioned iron tea-kettle, and which must have weighed over thirty pounds—come out of his pack."

"Wasn't he mad?" asked Harry.

"No; or, at any rate, he didn't show it if he was. He looked kind of queer for a minute, and then said, 'All right, boys; I owe you one'—that was all. But the next day happened to be the birthday of the man who was so fond of specimens. We were over at the ponds. They are spring ponds, and mighty cold. The gen-

tleman of geological tastes was reading away for dear life at a novel. I noticed Tot whispering to the others. Suddenly they grabbed the man who was reading, neck and heels, and carried him down to the edge of the pond, in spite of his kicks and struggles. Then Tot said: 'He wants a specimen of the water of this pond to take away. It would be unkind for us to let him forget it. These specimens are such pleasant reminders.' Then they swung him, 'one,' 'two,' 'three,' and sent him flying out into that pond fifteen feet or more. They were always skylarking with one another. It was pretty rough play at times, but they seemed always to take it in good part."

"By-the-way, Mr. Dant," said Dick, "I meant to speak to you about something that happened the night we went moose-calling. You had told us to be quiet at the time, so I couldn't speak of it then, and I haven't thought of it since when it was convenient to talk about it. How far do you suppose we were over there from other people?"

"Of course I don't know for sure, but I doubt if there was a living soul within fifty miles or more of us. Why?"

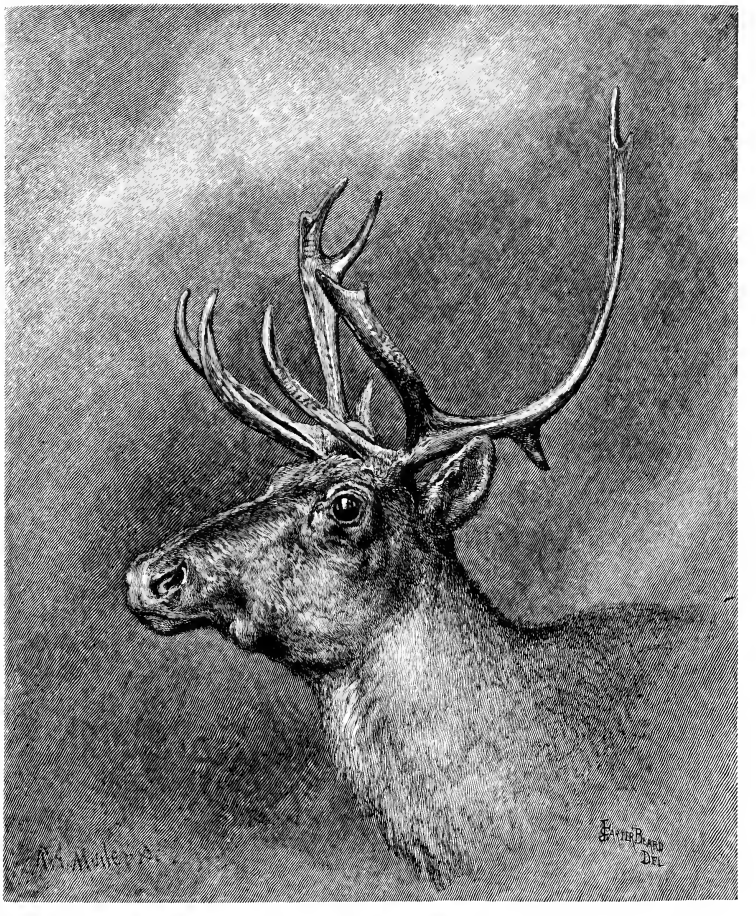
"Because," continued Dick, "I heard some one that evening fire a double-barrelled gun, one barrel right after the other. It sounded a little softer than a gun does close to—more like 'bung! bung!' than 'bang! bang!' but of course the distance accounted for that, as it was a long way off. Still, I'm sure I made no mistake about hearing it, or that it was a gun."

"Oh no, you made no mistake," replied the trapper, "or rather only a little mistake. You've only mistaken a bull-caribou for a double-barrelled gun—that's all."

"What?" exclaimed Harry. "I heard it too. You don't really mean to say that a caribou made that noise? Oh, you're joking us!"

"No, I'm not. That was really the call of a bull-caribou. Everybody makes the same mistake when they hear it the first time, and it's always hard to convince them it is a mistake. But that's the fact all the same."

"We haven't anything better to do, Mr. Dant," said Dick. "Why



HEAD OF A BULL-CARIBOU.

can't you tell us something about caribou? There's nothing I should like better."

"Nor I either," said Harry.

"All right; I'd just as lief. The first thing is, naturally, how it looks. A full-grown bull may stand five feet high at the fore-shoulder, and weigh possibly seven hundred pounds. They are always white underneath and on the throat. Elsewhere they are reddish-brown in summer, mouse-color in the fall, growing grayer as the winter advances, until the older bulls may be nearly white. In size, color, form, and general appearance the head looks a good deal like that of an Alderney cow, and if that cow was rather lightly built it wouldn't give a bad idea of the shape of a caribou. The horns are in the reindeer style, and in queerness are of a piece with the disposition of the animal. Not only are the horns never alike on any two different caribou, but the right and left horn of the same animal always differ in shape. The older cows occasionally have horns, though quite small; and, as far as I know, are the only kind of doe deer that ever do have horns.

"The winter coat of the caribou is very soft, and so thick that it is impossible to work the fingers through the hair to the skin beneath. Its legs are slender, deer-shaped, and handsome, but they end in hoofs out of all proportion in size. These hoofs are quite low, measured from the ground up to where the hair begins, but taken across the bottom parallel with the ground, they are almost as big as a saucer. It's a good deal like a five-year-old boy standing in his father's slippers. Their hoofs are hollow underneath and quite sharp on the edges, so that a caribou can keep its footing on slippery ice or logs like a goat. Its dew-claws are as large as an ordinary deer's hoof, and are not for ornament but practical use. When passing over snow or treacherous ground, the caribou spreads out its deeply cloven hoof like a duck's foot, and bringing its dew-claws into play to increase its bearing, it skims at full speed over a surface which would stall a moose or a deer at once.

"Unlike the selfish and solitary moose, the caribou loves the company of its kind. To-day it will act as if almost afraid of its own shadow, and show a keenness of eye, ear, and nose which makes

an approach to within rifle-shot next to impossible. To-morrow it will stand fire like a veteran soldier, and face the hunter with a stupid stare, while he misses shot after shot in his anxiety to take advantage of his opportunity. To-day it will follow for miles along a trail after a man, as if it wanted to catch up with him and give him a message. To-morrow, one sniff of the tainted track, and it will not break its run for five miles.

"It never yards in winter, like the moose and deer, nor has it their fondness for a particular locality. It is as likely to be found on the tops and sides of the loftiest mountains as in the deepest valleys, with no other apparent reason to guide it than the whim of the moment. It has a most happy-go-lucky disposition, taking the future as it comes, without a thought whether the sky is going to fall or not until the pieces begin to clatter about its ears. It will venture, without the slightest hesitation, on ice or on to a bog unfit to bear a man, break through, splash and wallow about in the most reckless fashion, and finally when it reaches the bank give itself a shake, and look about with the air of a circus performer who has just jumped over six elephants and is waiting for the applause of the audience.

"It's as fond of the ice as a school-boy, and full as ready for a frolic. After the ice has formed in November it is soon covered with snow; then comes rain, turning the snow into slush resting on the firm ice underneath. Now, any sensible creature would keep away from such a mess if it could, but to the caribou this is just the time and place for a picnic. The herd goes out on the ice in single file, then scatters, and each one falls to pawing up the slush with its fore-feet. When this ceases to be fun, they fall on their knees and seem to lap the ice with their tongues. Why they do it beats me. It can't be from thirst, because they have crossed a dozen open brooks in their morning ramble; and besides, they couldn't every one of them be suddenly taken so dry all at once. It's a queer creature, is the caribou. I've known it now for a good many years. You get to the bottom of the tricks of a deer or a moose after a while, but a caribou has always a fresh surprise in stock.

"But to come back to the ice. After a while one will suspend

operations, rise to its feet, seem to think things over generally for a while, then go solemnly over to where another has mined down to a piece of ice of extra flavor, and prod and poke its comrade with the utmost vigor. The assaulted caribou rises to its feet and meekly resigns its place to the animal that has attacked it, which at once drops

HEAD OF A COW-CARIBOU.

on its knees and continues the operations of the one it has driven away; while the ousted animal either passes along the compliment to some other which it thinks it can bully, or digs a fresh place for itself. Then perhaps all will lie down for a while, though one would think such a bed was about as comfortable as the inside of

an ice-cream freezer, and chew the cud, apparently as happy as you please. Next, one will slowly rise to its feet, round up its back, and stretch itself, look its comrades over until it picks out the one that seems most comfortable, and then, like those fellows that are so fond of early rising when there is no occasion for it, proceed to kick and punch it until it also gets on its legs and joins in the game. Soon all are on their feet, and falling in one behind the other in single file, they start for the woods, headed by a leader, which is always a bull, but not necessarily the biggest in the herd.

"They move off at a walk, their heads hanging down, just like a lot of cows driven to pasture. Suddenly one will become possessed of a devil, and breaking from the ranks with a hop, skip, and a jump, charge through the line again and again until it is thrown into complete disorder. Then it will as suddenly fall into place again as demure as a cat, as though it was just the last caribou in the world to kick up a row. Then they will begin to move off as before. It may be they will disappear into the woods on the meekest kind of a walk; or, without the slightest apparent cause, the whole herd will break into a run at a pace so keen you almost fancy you can hear them whiz through the air. This burst of speed may last for a hundred yards; it may be kept up through thick and thin for five miles; one is about as likely as the other. But I guess I'm spinning the thing out rather too fine. To me a caribou is the most interesting animal that ranges these woods. I've watched them when they have been under the muzzle of my rifle by the hour, so interested in their pranks that I couldn't find the heart to fire. But I'll get over the ground quicker after this."

"Oh no, don't do anything of the kind," said Dick. "We haven't anything else to do, so there's no hurry. You can't be too long to please me. Before we came up here I read all I could get hold of on the caribou, but I didn't find anything of this kind. I didn't feel as if I got acquainted with the animal at all from what I read; but from what you tell me, it seems almost as if I could see it. You needn't be afraid of tiring me, that you can be sure of. What do you say, Harry?"

"I say so too. These are just the things that interest me. I

read the same books, but they didn't go into the things that you tell us at all. So do go on, and spin it out as thin as you can; the thinner the better."

"People who write books on these subjects," said the trapper, "are not likely to hit on this kind of thing. When most men go into the woods they seem to be just devoured with a thirst for blood. If they get a chance to kill anything, they can't rest quiet

CARIBOU ON THE ICE.

for half a second till they have fired, for fear they'll lose it. I used to be so myself; but I found out after a while that it paid a great deal better to watch an animal when I had the chance—and those chances don't come very often—and learn its habits, than to kill it off-hand. Many and many a trick in trapping and hunting have I found out that way which I never would have dreamed of otherwise. But if you really wish it, I will go on as I have begun. I

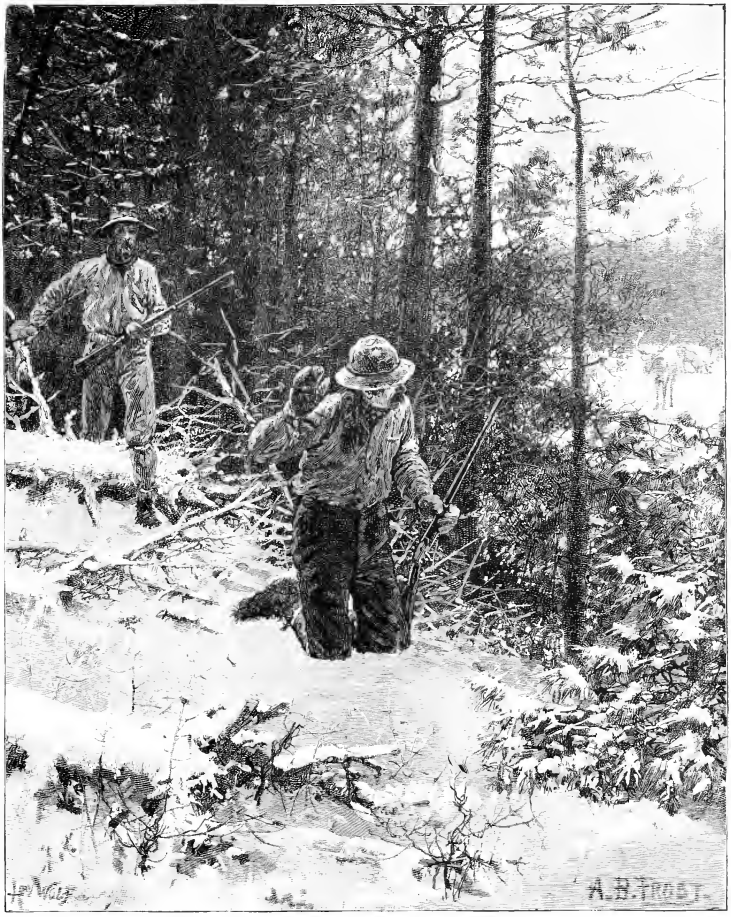
like to talk of these things as well as any one to a person who cares to listen, but I don't want to bore you."

"There's no danger of hurting us that way, so please go on;" replied Dick.

"All right, the risk is yours!" replied the trapper, and continued as follows:

"When a caribou-hunter dreams that he has a soft thing on the caribou, he always fancies he has caught them at their tricks on the ice. When the season is right, he always approaches every little patch of water, or rather ice, against the wind, and feeling as though he was just going to try for a prize in a grab-bag at a church fair. If he is in luck, and finds caribou on the ice, and understands what he is about, he doesn't begin operations at once. In all serious business the herd takes its impulse from its leader, just as a steam-engine is controlled by its engineer. He is the brains that does all the thinking and planning for the herd. Kill him, and though the power to do is still there, that which decided what should be done is gone. It doesn't take very long for an experienced man to pick out the caribou that is in command and drop him. Instantly everything is in confusion. The herd circle around their fallen leader totally at a loss what to do, until some other takes his place and all break for the shelter of the woods. If the hunter is then a quick and sure shot, he may take pretty heavy toll out of the herd before it gains cover.

"But if the pond is small and closely surrounded by hills and thick woods, the first shot echoes from the opposite side and keeps echoing first from one place and then from another, until it would puzzle any one who didn't know to tell where the real shot came from. To the caribou it seems as if every way of escape into the woods was cut off. They circle around utterly demoralized, swinging their heads from side to side, snuffing the air, and doing their best to scent out the direction of the danger. If the rifle is in the hands of a butcher, every caribou may fall before, driven by desperation to take any chance for the sake of cover, one breaks for the woods. The rest, if any, follow at once, and not until after many a mile will they slacken their pace to a walk.



IN LUCK.

"When a deer or a moose meets a windfall, it either goes round or jumps over it if too high to step over. But a caribou, if undisturbed, mounts the fallen trees and walks along their trunks, jumping from one to another as if it had been brought up in a circus.

"Caribou-meat, though not quite up to moose-meat, is a good deal better than venison. How it's ever made out of the kind of stuff they feed on beats me. In the summer it's not so bad, the blue-joint, flat grass, and that which trails in the current of running streams, and the three-leaf sorrel, then form its food. The sorrel, though, only seems to be eaten when it grows alongside of some cold spring or boggy place in the woods. But its winter food is about as tempting as a hair mattress. As the weather grows colder it turns to that grayish moss which hangs like an old man's beard from fir and spruce trees. This and a short thick moss which grows on the bark of old-growth yellow birch-trees then form its food; and with the moss it will bolt chunks of yellow birch bark as big as a silver dollar. I've heard that in some places they paw away the snow in winter and hunt for their food on the ground, but I never saw any signs of their doing it here.

"If there were to be a grand race of all the four-footed creatures of the earth that can run, I'd bet my money on the caribou every time. In comparison, a deer or moose is nowhere in point of speed. With its back almost level, each leg swinging as if it were hung on a pivot, its hoofs clattering together at every stride, a caribou will get over the ground at a rate that'll make a man stare if there's any stare in him.

"Some years ago, when I didn't know as much about caribou as I do now, I was returning from one of my trapping-lines above the lake. When trapping, a man has to take so much in his pack, and has to stop to use his axe and hands so often, that a rifle can't be carried very conveniently, and that's the way I had been travelling. I used to get sort of lonely then at times, not having a soul to speak to all through the long winter, so I had a big, long-legged dog for company. I don't know what kind of a dog it was, but it was shaped a good deal like a greyhound, only much heavier and stouter, and had stiffish yellow hair about half-way in length between a

smooth-haired and a Newfoundland dog. Some people called it a wolf-hound, but I don't really know what it was. The way that dog could get over the ground when he chose to was a sight to see. He had pulled down a full-grown buck in less than a mile in fair open running for both. I never used to let him run game, though, if I could help it, because I never believed in it.

"Well, I hit the lake up near its head. As usual, and more from habit than anything else, I took a look over the lake before I left the cover of the woods. What should I see but three caribou playing on the ice just below the islands! By taking back through the woods a little way I could put the islands between them and me, and so get very near them, as the wind was all right. The notion struck me all of a sudden that that was the time to try how fast caribou could really travel. Coming on them so sudden, I thought they'd most likely make straight away from us towards the foot of the lake. That would give us a good clear course of a little more than a mile and a half. The ice was covered with just a little crust of hard snow. In short, things could hardly be better for all hands —for me, for the dog, and for the caribou; we all had a fair chance to do our level best.

"Well, we—that is, the dog and I—got behind the islands and began to sneak up on them. Before long the dog smelled them, and began to look up at me mighty anxious and give a little whimper once in a while. I shook my fist at him, a sign he understood well enough to mean that he must keep quiet; though, to make sure he wouldn't go off half-cocked, I grabbed him by the collar when we began to get pretty near. When we came round the lower point of the last island, there were those caribou not twenty yards from us. I then let the dog go and sung out to him to take them. The dog by this time was just crazy for it. All he wanted was the chance, and he stretched his long legs out over that ice the best he knew. The caribou, as they always do when suddenly alarmed, swung round at once towards the noise to see what the trouble was; and, before they had made up their minds that it was time to be up and doing, the dog had almost closed the gap. For about a quarter of a mile or so it was nip and tuck, the dog not over two or three yards

behind and straining his best to close on them. Then the caribou seemed first to call on their reserve powers and give up trifling. They went so fast you could almost hear them hum through the air clear back where I was. When they disappeared in the woods the dog was not half-way to the foot of the lake.

"As for the dog, it pretty near broke his heart. He came back when I called him with his tail down, and slunk round behind me, looking up sort of sidewise out of the corner of his eye as he went by, as if he were afraid I'd disown him. You never saw such a sick-looking dog that hadn't anything the matter with him except that he'd lost his self-respect.

"To tell the truth, I didn't like it any too well myself. I didn't want the caribou, as I had plenty of meat. I'd rather expected they'd beat the dog, but it never entered my head that they'd distance him that way. It kept worrying me for some time. Finally I concluded that that ice was prime travelling for caribou, and that it was their day; but that when March came and the snow was deep and crusted, I'd give them a breather that would put the laugh on the other side. I thought I was some at snow-shoeing then, for I'd beaten in every race I'd ever tried.

"March came. The snow couldn't be better for my purpose if I had it made to order. It was nearly six feet deep on the level, hard on the surface and soft underneath, with just about an inch of light snow over the top. I couldn't ask for better travelling for myself, or worse for any animal as heavy as a caribou. I had been over to the Little River looking after some traps, and on my way back chanced on five caribou lying down. They were on their feet in an instant, facing me not thirty yards off. I happened to have my rifle with me that time, and could have dropped one or two of them easy; but that was not my game. I was going to avenge that dog's wrongs if it was in my skin, and I rather thought it was. In a second my pack, rifle, axe, and everything else that could hold me back was on the snow, and I was at them. I had no idea of killing any of them, but I did intend to run them until they were sick enough of it to come to a stand; and I didn't think it was going to take so very long either.

"Of course they distanced me at first, but that I had expected; even a deer could have done that, and I knew well enough that to run a deer and a caribou to a stand were two very different things. A mile was passed and I hadn't seen hide nor hair of them. Another mile was run, yet there was nothing but the track I followed to show they were ahead of me. I noticed that they didn't slump anything like what a moose would have done. Another thing, too, looked rather dubious: I couldn't see a sign that they were distressed in the least—such as froth lying near the trail, or places where they had snatched a mouthful of snow as they ran. It was certainly time for some such sign. I began to think that perhaps I had undertaken something more of a contract than I had expected; but I was in for it now, and my mad began to rise. For the next mile I put in the very best licks I knew. At its end I began to feel as if I had done something like a day's work. But as for the caribou, as far as their trail showed, they were dusting along at just about the same gait they had started with, without a sign of flagging. I could hardly believe my eyes, and thought I must have passed some signs of distress in my hurry without noticing them. It was too great a come down to admit that a four-footed animal of hundreds of pounds in weight lived which I couldn't run down on snow-shoes in such heavy snow.

"While these things were passing through my mind I hadn't let up any in my efforts. Just then the trail took a bend and headed for the river. Now, thinks I, I've got 'em. I hardly thought they would change direction again, and if they kept that course they would hit the river at the rapids. The cold up here in the winter is so savage that even on the rapids the water thickens like porridge and chokes the current, and solid ice begins to form along the edges and in the eddies. This backs up the water, which rises and rises until the pressure is too much for the ice. The water then begins to run under the ice, and cuts away at its foundations with all the force of a spring freshet. At last the whole mass breaks down into the current and is swept away. This leaves on each bank a border of ice with a straight up and down face. The ice at once begins to form again in the same way, and the same thing happens

again and again, all the time building the perpendicular ice-banks higher and higher. Now, I knew this had been going on for months and had been increased by every fall of snow, until the river was running between perpendicular banks of ice and frozen snow at least eight feet high. Towards this the caribou were going, and there, headed by such an obstacle and tired by their efforts, I felt sure they must come to a stand.

"I pushed on as fast as I could. At last I reached the river. There was the ice-wall on both banks as straight up and down as the side of a house. No man without a ladder or cutting a way with an axe could have got down, much less climb up on the other side; while between them the icy water was roaring over the rocks some three or four feet deep. I looked around for the caribou. The trail led straight to the bank. Down that ice-wall they had gone, and up the other side, with hardly a break in their speed. Then I knew I was beaten; and when I pulled off my mitten and felt of the tracks in the snow to see how long they had been made, I declare they seemed older than all the time I had been running them. Since then I have believed that no man has any business running caribou on snow-shoes, or in any other way for that matter, unless with an express engine; and then he has got to shovel in the coal mighty lively.

"There, will that do you?"

"You haven't told us how you hunt caribou except on the ice," replied Harry. "Tell us about that."

"Before the snow comes we occasionally get one under a jack, just as we got the moose. My way is to go dark, as we did, for though sometimes a caribou will stand to an open light, oftener it will not.

"The best time is when about three or four inches of snow lie in the woods. Then's the time for still hunting. While trapping, the hunter has kept track of where the caribou are working. He puts on three or four heavy woollen shirts, one over the other, for a coat would catch in the bushes through which he must pass, and that wouldn't do at all. He wears a very broad-brimmed felt hat to keep the snow he will shake down on him out of the back

of his neck; for among the thickest firs and spruces, where the long gray moss hangs, is the place where he must look for his game. Four or five pairs of heavy woollen socks cover his feet, and over them is placed a pair of caribou-shanks. Whenever we get a caribou we take the skin from the hind-legs, cutting it about four or five inches above the gambrel joint, then splitting it open in front, and removing it clear to the hoof. The gambrel joint forms the heel of a stocking, which is made by doubling the extra length of hide over the hunter's toes and back towards his instep. This is then sewed on both sides where the sole of an ordinary shoe joins the upper; and these, worn with the hair outside, are caribou-shanks. Boots or shoes are too noisy to be thought of. He puts in his pockets food for one meal, knowing that he will start his game soon. Then he will either be successful, or he might just as well go back to camp; for when a caribou is once wound up by alarm it takes so long to run down that it's useless to follow it.

"He then takes his rifle, puts a hatchet in his belt, and is off. He soon finds plenty of tracks, if he is not out in the notion of about where the caribou are working. The age of these tracks is the first thing to be settled. If it is still snowing, the quantity of snow which has fallen over them will tell the story. If it has not snowed since the tracks were made, and the tracks are over a day old, little frost-needles will be seen in the footprint; but if made the night before or since, none of these frost-needles will be found. He then takes off his mitten and feels whether the snow thrown up by the tracks is loose or frozen. If loose, the track is fresh; if frozen, it is two or three hours old. These are the leading signs, but still there are a good many others, all of which are studied, and from them a good hunter learns pretty much all there is to learn about the herd, except where they are and how many animals are in it. At last a pretty recent track is found and followed. While he is following it he keeps both eyes wide open for signs of feeding. When travelling, caribou, like all other heavy animals in a wooded country, follow in single file, each one stepping pretty much in the tracks of that ahead of it. This makes it very hard to tell how large a herd is, or how it's made up, when they are moving. But when they

RETURN FROM CARIBOU-HUNTING.

begin to feed they scatter, and each one writes its own description on the snow. So the hunter studies this mighty close; for besides learning how many animals he has before him, he must find how much the herd has fed and how much more it is likely to feed. When they have eaten enough he knows they will lie down. They may snatch a bite here and there, and move on. But sooner or later they will scatter and make eating a business. From these signs and others he judges how near he is to them. When he thinks they have eaten enough and will soon lie down, he overhauls his rifle, gets the snow out of the muzzle, cocks and uncocks it three or four times, works the breech mechanism, and generally sees that all is clear for action; for the many falls he has had in the snow, and the quantity he has shaken down from the trees, have covered him again and again.

"He then creeps forward, all eyes and ears, avoiding everything that may make a noise as though it were a hornet's nest. He does not need to pay much attention to the wind, for among the thick evergreens clogged with snow it is almost always calm, no matter how hard it blows over the tree-tops. Every bush, every stump or fallen tree in sight, is examined with the greatest suspicion, for the snow sticking to the coats of the caribou makes it no fool's job to distinguish them unless in motion. It is of course impossible to help making some noise once in a while, and it may be they are the first to find out what's up. Instantly all spring to their feet and face him — generally, if he has been careful, at some twenty or thirty yards' distance. Now is the time. No waiting for a side shot, but draw on the biggest, and give it to him right in the middle of the chest at the root of the neck; for if the hunter waits, in a second they will be off like the wind, and he must take his chance as they run among the thick trees. If the herd is made up of two bulls, and one falls, the other is almost sure to come back inside of an hour or so, looking for his companion; if a bull and a cow, the cow will not return; while if a large herd is started, it's every one for itself.

"Having secured his game, the hunter at once builds a big fire near it, and begins to skin and dress the animal before it has time

to freeze. He then wraps the liver and tenderloin in the hide, tying them up with a strip cut from the edge of the skin. The rest of the meat he hangs on the trees, and, shouldering his bundle, returns to camp for his sled. On his way to camp, about seven times out of ten, he amuses himself by calling himself all manner of hard names for making the mistake he has so often made before, of not seeing his game before it was in motion, even while it was under his very nose. That's the way I still hunt them, and that pretty well finishes up all I can think of about caribou now."

CHAPTER XVI.

Storm-bound.—Plans for the Future.—The Trapper comments on Life in the Woods.—The Boys return Home.

DURING the continuance of the storm neither pleasure nor profit was to be had out-of-doors. All day long the rain streamed down. To the boys, longing to be in the open air, it was a weary time. Towards evening the rain ceased at last, and a change of wind gave hope of a change of weather.

The trapper busied himself about the camp during the day; in the afternoon he was unusually silent and thoughtful. After supper he said:

"Boys, I am afraid this storm rather knocks our plans in the head. If things had followed their usual course, we would have had a week or ten days more of good weather, ending in such a storm

as this. In this hilly country such a heavy fall of water as we have had floods the streams and bogs, so that trapping about them is at a stand-still for a few days. I had planned all along to use the time while the water was dropping to its natural level for my last trip to the settlement. I am behindhand with my trapping now, and it will hardly do to lose any more time on top of that already lost. I am mighty sorry, but we ought to go down-river to-morrow."

The boys heard this announcement with no little dismay. Since they had fallen into the trapper's hands they had lived free from care, altogether in the present. With his words the necessities of the future arose before them, and what was that future to be? Their way to the settlement, with the aid of the trapper, lay open; but there the store-keeper must be met, clamorous to be paid for his lost boat. Then it was many miles to the railroad. True, they could walk it now they had nothing to carry, but not clothed as they were. Then, having reached the railroad, what were they to do without one cent of money? The outlook was indeed gloomy.

The boys looked one at the other, in silence and with blank faces, for some moments. Then Dick said:

"You mustn't let us stand in your way for one minute, Mr. Dant. You've made it so pleasant for us here that we are sorry to part from you. It would be a very poor return for your kindness if we were not. But it had to come sooner or later, and it is plain enough that to-morrow ought to be the time. What do you say, Harry?"

"Of course we must go to-morrow, whether we like it or not," replied Harry. "Mr. Dant must visit the settlement before the river freezes up; and it is better for him to go now, when he can do nothing else and has the time to spare, than later, when he would have to lose the time from his trapping. We've put him to too much inconvenience already; we mustn't think of increasing it."

"If it wasn't really necessary, boys, I shouldn't have spoken of it," said the trapper. "I've been thinking it over all day, and can't see any way out of it. It is either use waste time now or steal valuable time by-and-by. Much as I hate to break up, I am afraid that there is no help for it: so we will consider that settled. There is

"INSTANTLY EVERYTHING IS IN CONFUSION."

another thing I've been considering too, and that is, what you are to do after you reach the settlement. I've planned it this way, if it suits you: When we get there, I will see the store-keeper about his boat the first thing. He wanted to sell it to me a while ago, but I wouldn't buy it. I have changed my mind now, as it's up here. I shall keep his boat and bring you down in mine. That'll fix that matter without any trouble. Then I'll get a team to take us to the railroad, as I have business there. What clothes you need to take you home can be had near the depot. I will see you have your railroad tickets too. I think that'll fix things as they should be. How does it strike you?"

"If we talked till Christmas-time we could not thank you enough, Mr. Dant, for what you have already done," replied Dick. "All we can do now is to thank you again for what you propose to do. What would we have done without you?"

"We couldn't have done anything except starve to death," said Harry. "But we shall never forget your kindness, Mr. Dant, nor will our parents forget it either, I know; and they will repay you every cent of expense you are at on our account."

"Oh, I am satisfied well enough I sha'n't lose anything by you," replied the trapper. "I've seen enough of you to know you are not the kind to take advantage of me. I have the money to spare and have no use at all for it till spring, and so can fix you out just as well as not. There! we'll call our arrangements all complete, and think and talk of something else.

"I've a word or two on my mind and I have been thinking whether I'd better say it to you or not. It may not be necessary, but it will do no harm anyway, so here goes.

"I suppose it's no use now to tell you that in coming up here in the hope of making anything at hunting or trapping, you did a mighty foolish thing. You've found that out for yourselves. There! you needn't look so cheap about it. Lots of city boys do the same. They get their heads stuffed full of nonsense about the woods, out of books which give about as true an idea of woods life as they do of life in the middle of China, and not much more. To read them you'd think that up here it was just one continual

picnic, where the weather and everything else could be ordered beforehand to suit, and where the main ambition of game was to give greenhorns a chance to shoot it. The truth is it's a very rough life even to those brought up to it, with hard work in plenty, and fun, except such as can be found in hard work, mighty scattering. You'd think a man a fool who tried to sail a vessel across the ocean with no one aboard who had ever sailed a boat before. But it's just the same thing in the woods. Life in the woods is a life by itself, as much as life at sea is a life by itself. It's different from any other kind of a life.

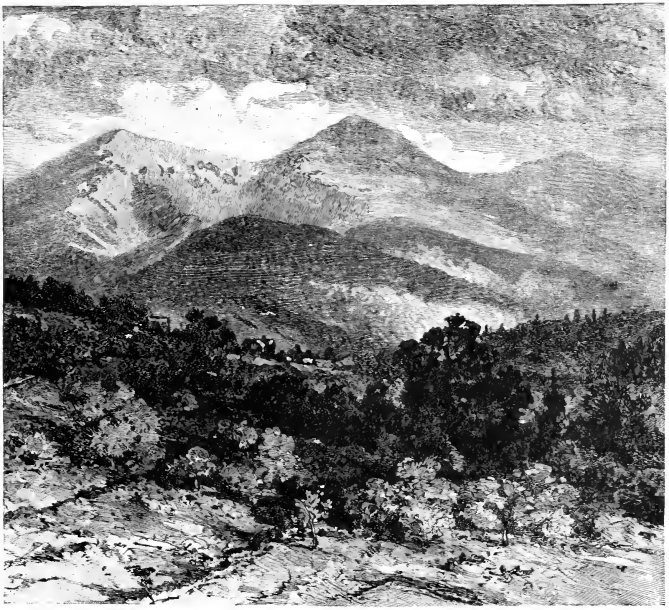
"If a person puts the muzzle of a loaded rifle in his mouth and pulls the trigger, off goes his head whether he knew it was loaded or not. It's just so in the woods. A man must look out for himself. He must know what should be done under all circumstances and do it, and what ought not to be done and never do it, or take the consequences; and there's no dodging them either.

"And how is a person to learn what is the right thing, except by education and experience? It takes just as much study and practice to learn how to live in the woods, or nearly as much anyway, as it does to teach Greek in a college. I don't mean to live in what I would call luxury and you would think bare comfort, for there is no luxury to be had in the woods except plenty of fresh air and hard work; I mean merely to live at all.

"As to a greenhorn's making anything of trapping or hunting, he might just as well think of making money mining in the moon. You brought a dozen traps. How many do you suppose I have? Nearly five hundred. I work over those traps in a way you couldn't do to save your lives. From the first break of dawn until dusk, whether it rains or shines, whether it is pleasant or whether the thermometer is 'way below zero and the air filled with flying snow, I am on my trapping-lines, always with forty or fifty pounds on my back besides my axe. When night comes, no matter how tired I am, I must make camp, cut wood enough to surely last all night, cook, and skin the animals I have taken from my traps that day, before I sleep. Often this takes me till midnight. But whatever the hour may be, I must be off again at daybreak the next morn-

"THE THERMOMETER 'WAY BELOW ZERO AND THE AIR FILLED WITH FLYING SNOW."

ing. After the trapping season fairly opens, it is only on Sundays I can indulge in such luxuries as are to be had in my little cabin, rough as you no doubt think it. At other times I lie on the ground or in the snow, thankful for even a bark shelter, half the time wet



THE LAST VIEW OF THE WILDERNESS.

through, and with but a single blanket to cover me, and in such weather that any one who did not know just what to do would be frozen stiff as a stake before morning.

"And how much do you suppose, with all my traps, labor, and experience I make in a season? If I get three hundred dollars for my fur I have done well.

"Nine-tenths of the people who come up here as you have done have never handled an axe in their lives. How long do you suppose it would take such a person to cut a cold night's fire-wood?"

The boys looked at one another, but preserved a discreet silence.

"They couldn't cut wood enough for one night of such a fire as is necessary after the snow comes in half a day. Watch a man chop who knows how, and it seems the most simple thing in the world. But really it takes long practice. A man who can't use an axe well is almost as helpless in the woods as if he had no arms at all. Nothing will take its place. It is absolutely indispensable.

"I needn't say anything about how dangerous an axe is to a person who isn't used to it, for I've told you about that already. But it may be just as well to remember that an injury which would be trifling where help and a doctor were handy, might be a very serious matter up here.

"Then think of the risk of getting lost. A man might wander about here a year and never meet a living soul. A compass is no help unless you know how to use it in the woods, and that's quite a different thing from using it on the water."

The trapper was as good as his word. He satisfied the storekeeper as to his boat, took the boys to the railroad, supplied them with their tickets and saw them safely off for home on the train, where they parted with many a shake of the hand and many a good-by.

When the long winter was over and the trapper came once more to the settlement with the results of his trapping, he found the following letter awaiting him:

"BOSTON, *November* 10, 188–

"*Mr. John Dant:*

"MY DEAR SIR,—We can never thank you as you deserve to be thanked for your kindness to our boys during their recent experience in the Maine woods. Enclosed please find my check for two

hundred and fifty dollars in return for the money you so kindly advanced them, and as some slight acknowledgment of our indebtedness to you otherwise. Mr. Hildreth joins in the sentiments expressed in this letter, and contributes half of the enclosed.

"Yours truly,

"R. D. Halstead."

THE END.

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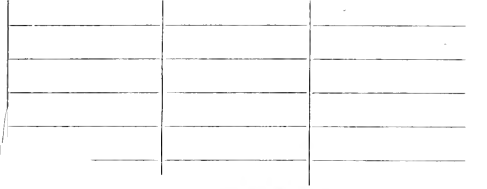

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